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Ulster: the final push for peace

Ewen MacAskill and John Mulvan

TONY Blair and the Irish Prime Minister, Bertie Ahern, last night set down in Downing Street to broker a deal they hope will bring a lasting Northern Ireland peace settlement by midnight next Thursday.

With so few days remaining for achieving the dream that has eluded so many governments over the past 29 years, Mr Blair and Mr Ahern were anxious to resolve their last outstanding differences. They also agreed tactics for chivvying the warring parties into acceptance of a deal over the final few days.

Earlier Mr Blair in the Commons made an impassioned plea to the parties not to squander the chance. "We have the chance of doing that now in Northern Ireland. It is a historic opportunity. It will come this generation and maybe not in future generations," he said.

Mr Ahern, for his part, had pointed to serious differences with Britain over the proposals. In a move signalling hard talking in Downing Street, he said there were "large disagreements that could not be cloaked". Speaking in Dublin before leaving for London, he said: "I don't know whether we can surmount this."

He said: "If we are to be able to give talks chairman Senator George Mitchell a document that will be somewhere near agreement between the two governments, then we will have to succeed



Bertie Ahern: 'differences that cannot be cloaked'

in doing a lot of work on that tonight."

Meny at Westminster remained upbeat, believing that crucially Mr Blair and the Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble have reached an accommodation.

A British official said last night: "If we can pull this off, Belfast will be the place to be next Thursday. No peace effort yet has got so far. I would not have believed even a few months ago we could have got so far."

The pace will pick up today when the conclusion of an inquiry into the Maze prison is announced. A consultation paper on firearms in Northern Ireland is also to be published, which can be seen as a contribution to decommissioning in the long term.

Mr Mitchell, who has been chairing the peace talks at Castle Buildings at Stormont, is scheduled to present his

proposals for a settlement to the Northern Ireland parties tomorrow and suggest they continue meeting on Saturday if need be in the push for agreement.

Mr Mitchell's proposals will be close to those agreed by Mr Blair and Mr Ahern last night. The two also discussed whether and when Mr Blair should go to Belfast next week, to chair the last stage of the talks.

The Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, warned against expecting fringe violence to end on Good Friday.

Giving evidence to a Commons select committee, she promised that as soon as it was obvious that the settlement had been reached, there would be reform of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, a key Sinn Féin demand. But, maintaining the balancing act, she tried to keep the Unionists on-side by promising the change to the RUC would be evolutionary.

In a further concession to Unionist sensibilities, the Government rejected demands in a UN report for a fresh inquiry into the murder of the Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane, claiming there was no new evidence. Mr Finucane was shot dead at home by Loyalist paramilitaries.

There were angry exchanges at the Belfast talks yesterday, but this may have been posturing. John Taylor, deputy leader of the Ulster Unionists, waded in, calling it "outrageous" that the Irish had failed to come up with satisfactory changes in articles two and three of the Republic's constitution.

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Reg Kray at his brother Ron's funeral. He will have served 30 years in prison on May 8

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVE HOGAN

Mardi Gra bombs arrest

Duncan Campbell Crime Correspondent

AMAN was arrested last night in connection with more than 30 'Mardi Gra' bombs in the London area in the past three years. Police also carried out a controlled explosion of a suspect package in west London.

A Scotland Yard spokeswoman confirmed that a man acting suspiciously in the Ruislip area of west London had been arrested. He had what is believed to be a firearm and was taken to a police station to be interviewed.

Earlier a suspect package had been seen near Sainsbury's supermarket in South Ruislip. Armed police evacuated the store and a controlled explosion was carried out on what turned out to be a harmless empty box. No-one was injured.

Sainsbury's has been the main target of the self-styled Mardi Gra bomber in recent months.

He started his campaign in 1994 when the target was apparently Barclays Bank. The first bombs were sent in video boxes which contained the words 'Welcome to the Mardi Gra Experience'. The bomber has since signed himself Mardi Gra in letters to targets.

No-one has been seriously hurt but police have become increasingly concerned at the possibility of injuries and the cost of pursuing the bomber. Well over £1 million has been spent on the investigation. What has puzzled the police is that the bomber has continued to act despite the fact that he has extracted no money from his targets and apparently espouses no political cause.

The bombs have consisted of shotgun cartridges and timing devices.

Some of them have been left hidden in Sainsbury's shopping bags and have exploded after passers-by have picked up the bags and taken them away.

Banks v Livingstone in fight to be London mayor

John Duncan

SEVENTIES nostalgia, disco and retro food were given a new lease of life yesterday with the news that Tony Banks will sing it out against Ken Livingstone to be Labour's Cockney rebel candidate for London's first directly elected mayor. The pair were the capital's favourite politicians during their time at the Greater London Council together in the 70s and 80s.

Mr Banks yesterday confirmed that he would attempt to become Labour's candidate for London mayor, assuming Londoners vote to have one in next month's referendum.

Mr Banks, MP for Newham North West and sports minister, joins Mr Livingstone as the only two declared candidates for the job. Mr Banks, who joined the GLC in 1970 and was chairman in the year of its demise, vied with Mr Livingstone for socialist street cred in the days of the GLC.

Mr Banks was best loved for his attempt to ban the County Hall champagne bar for being elitist and for inviting Miss Whiplash to hold a booze launch at the same venue.

Mr Banks may be in the un-



familiar role of being the establishment's choice for the job, with Mr Livingstone considered too leftwing for current party tastes. The party desperately need a populist candidate with London credibility to sidestep a Livingstone challenge and take on a possible high profile campaign by Jeffrey Archer.

"I'm definitely going to go for it," said Mr Banks yesterday. "After I've seen the terms and conditions of course. I'm going to go for it, because it's a great job."

Mr Banks's street-sharp Cockney credibility will

stand him in good stead, though he was actually born well out of the Bow Bells catchment area — in Belfast in 1943 and moved to Brixton in London a couple of years later.

Though Mr Banks used to revel in his role as a parliamentary mischief maker — he once described Nicholas Soames as "his own personal good mountain" — he has found himself a soft target for media attacks as sports minister. One tabloid targeted him last October with a headline "Back This Clown" after he described William Hague as a "foetus".

He also says what he thinks rather more freely than ministerial guidelines normally suggest — "glitches in my transition from saloon bar sage to world statesman". He was accused of another gaffe when he called for a UK national football team instead of four home countries, and he stirred up a minor storm when he opposed national anthems at international football games because they stir up nationalism.

"They say gaffes, they ain't gaffes," he said. "They're ideas, if you don't like them fair enough. If you think they're rubbish by all means say that they are, but they ain't gaffes."

Four more years for Kray: 'It's like a death sentence'

Duncan Campbell Crime Correspondent

REG Kray, the former Best End gangster, has been told he will not be considered for release for at least two years and probably for much longer. Last night, his lawyer described the decision as like a death sentence.

On May 6, Kray, aged 64, will have served the 30 years recommended at his Old Bailey trial. He had hoped that, following his recent marriage, he would be released or at least transferred to an open prison in preparation for release.

Yesterday his lawyer, Trevor Linn, said Kray had been called in to the governor's office in Wayland prison, near Thetford, Norfolk, and told his parole application had been turned down. He cannot apply again for two years.

"This is a decision without humanity," said Mr Linn yesterday. "It offers this man no hope that he will be released. It's a decision aimed at condemning him to death within the system which is what the establishment would like."

Mr Linn said Kray had been told he was not even to be considered for a move to a Category D prison — an open prison — for two years. Since life sentence prisoners normally have a period in an open jail in preparation for release, this would indicate that the earliest Kray might hope to be out is around 2002, when he will be nearly 70.

"The decision flies in the face of the overwhelming evidence presented to the parole board," said Mr Linn. In February, the Guardian disclosed that psychiatric reports presented to the board indicated Kray was no longer a risk.

Last night, Roberta Kray, whom he married last year, said she was devastated by the news. "I can't believe it," said Mrs Kray, aged 39, who has moved to Norfolk to be near her husband. "But he has been very philosophical about it. He told me last week that this was what he expected."

She believed one of the factors in the decision was that he had not "addressed his offending behaviour" as is required. He has expressed his regrets to the family of Jack "The Hat" McVitie, for whose murder he was jailed but he has not

said he was sorry he killed, arguing it was like killing a soldier in battle.

Mrs Kray, a classics and English literature graduate, married Reg Kray in prison last year. They had met when she was helping with publicity for a video about his late twin Ron, who died while serving his sentence in Broadmoor.

Kray has indicated that he would not live in London near his old haunts if released, but would look for a house in Norfolk where he was evacuated during the war. Roberta Kray has said they would like to live in the country and that many of their friends now do not have any connections with crime and his gangland past.

Mr Linn said that he would be seeking an explanation from Home Secretary Jack Straw about the reasons behind the decision.

"Jack Straw has obviously rubber-stamped the decision," said Mr Linn.

Reg Kray was jailed for life at the Old Bailey in 1969. The judge told him he should serve a minimum of 30 years. The average time served by a life sentence prisoner before release is 18 years.

Prague Writers' Festival 1998

The 8th Prague Writers' Festival presents a selection of fine authors from the Czech Republic and around the world. Meet them at the Franz Kafka Centre, Old Town Square, at 7 pm from 20 to 25 April.

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Thursday 23 April
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The Festival is dedicated to Bohumil Hrabal. Patron: the City of Prague.

For further details, please contact the Prague Writers' Festival Foundation, Staroměstské nám. 22, Prague 1 tel/fax +420 2 24 21 30 30

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Sketch

Blair defends his dark alter ego



Simon Hoggart

THE Prime Minister yesterday defended his controversial Press Secretary, Alastair Campbell.

Of course he did. Mr Campbell was sitting up in the Gallery, glowering down. If Mr Blair had said a word out of place, one suspected, he would have leapt down onto the floor, grabbed the helpless Premier by the lapels, and shouted: "That's complete bollocks, that is!"

The problem for both Mr Blair and Mr Campbell is that, while they may not, in the narrowest sense, have been caught out fibbing (in the same way the response "Who, me? You must be joking!" is not actually a denial that you stole the last slice of cake) no one can believe that they mean what they seem to be saying.

For instance, the first question Mr Blair faced yesterday was from the Tory Howard Flight, who wanted to know who specifically placed the notorious March 18 phone call between Mr Blair and his Italian opposite number, Romano Prodi.

"I am not going to disclose details of conversations," he said. "But as my press spokesman pointed out, the call was actually made by the Italian Prime Minister to me."

True as far as it goes, perhaps. But how do we know that Mr Prodi was not just returning Mr Blair's call, having been out of the office at the time? Or that Downing Street had originated the call but asked the Italians to ring back, in an admirable attempt to save public money?

Maybe it wasn't even about Rupert Murdoch. Perhaps, like Stevie Wonder, he had just called to tell Mr Blair that he loved him.

Gerald Kaufman, himself a former press officer, well used to the dark arts of media manipulation, then stood up to make a startling defence of Mr

Campbell. Attacks on this saintly figure were, he said, "over the top" and "hyped". Mr Kaufman (normally quite a thoughtful chap, and for the most part, fairly sane) compared Mr Campbell favourably to Margaret Thatcher's press secretary, Sir Bernard Ingham. He went on to list Sir Bernard's multitudinous crimes against humanity (which mostly turned out to involve hurting the feelings of various trembling, sensitive Tory Cabinet ministers).

There is of course a difference. Sir Bernard was the continuation of his boss by other means. Nobody could bear the thought of his presence. If Mrs Thatcher all the time, so he took over the job when she was tired, or asleep, or had been at the decanter.

Mr Campbell, by contrast, is the opposite of Tony Blair. He is Mr Hyde to his master's Dr Jekyll. Sir Bernard emphasised Mrs Thatcher's image; Mr Campbell contradicts Tony Blair's.

Paddy Ashdown kept trying to drag the subject back to Mr Murdoch. The Prime Minister airily remarked that he wanted to make sure there was no unfair treatment for BSkyB "or any significant British company".

In fact, BSkyB is a British company in the sense that the Coca Cola corporation is — in that you can buy its products here. Not in any other.

Later, Nicholas Soames captured the attention of the House by lolling around with his feet up on the bench in front of him. Some MPs tried and failed to raise this as a point of order. After Mr Soames had made a lengthy and somewhat rambling speech on the Regional Development Bill, the minister, Richard Caborn, said that he must have had "a very good lunch", and was "extremely emotional, if not a little tired".

We all know what that's supposed to mean. In fact Mr Soames narrowly avoided a very serious slander. The suggestion that Mr Soames had had a mere cheese sandwich for lunch, washed down by a cup of tea, would be quite outrageous. The boys in the wigs and gowns would have been instantly briefed and could look forward to enough "refreshers" to make Mr Soames himself envious.

Review

Freshly minting classic tunes

Review

Diana Krall/Ina Ballalany
Ronnie Scott's, London

THE great singer-pianist Diana Krall stunned her first-night audience, as expected. Advance ticket sales are now halted for her week-long season, so late-deciders have to stand or forget it, but oodles of minds. That a superb, hard-driving postbop band led by the British saxophonist Ina Ballalany is also on the bill is a bonus, and a neat contrast to Krall's lounge collectiveness and sideling swing.

Preoccupied and faintly apprehensive, Krall appears to turn herself into a musical instrument. Head bowed over the keyboard, her jawline sometimes appeared to twitch in synchronicity with a stuttering note or a reverberant right-hand trill.

The result is the transformation of a mainstream package that jazz nostalgia and neoclassicism have mostly turned into dinner-table cliché — the singer-pianist and the Great American Songbook. By her effortlessly flexible manipulation of rhythm at the piano (so that the music constantly surges forward, hovers tantalisingly, or pulls diffidently back), by her subtlety of dynamics, and by her cherishing of the spare and the succinct, Krall constantly reinvents the most familiar

materials. Her voice attacks notes with unexpected brusqueness, or sly circumspection, and the pitching undulates like the movement of water, so that the transforming effect expands into the remoulding of classic lyrics as if they were newly minted. When sounding close to the emotional edge, she brings the resignation, brief ecstasies and quiet desperation of those old Broadway love songs back to life.

In the first set of her run, Krall produced gleaming accounts of All or Nothing At All, Boulevard of Broken Dreams, Baby Baby All The Time, and an assortment of other standards from her recent impulse discs. But even with Krall's gifts, the show wouldn't have been as compelling as it was without the delicate empathy of her partners Russell Malone (guitar) and Ben Wolfe (bass). The unplugged-sounding Malone, in particular, is Krall's perfect foil — supplying streams of soft, padding chordwork behind her sudden, darting flourishes, and bursts of complex, singing, vibrato-packed solo lines reminiscent of Django Reinhardt or B B King. A tour de force.

Diana Krall's trio and Ina Ballalany's quartet are at Ronnie Scott's, Frith Street, until Saturday. This review appeared in later editions of yesterday's Guardian.

More than half the uniformed staff take protest action at flagship prison hit by brutality allegations

100 Scrubs staff call in sick

Alan Travis
Home Affairs Editor

MORE than half the uniformed staff at the flagship prison hit by brutality allegations refused to turn up to work yesterday by reporting in sick as a criminal investigation started at the jail.

The action by more than 100 prison officers at Wormwood Scrubs, west London, was defended last night by the Prison Officers' Association, which claimed the brutality allegations had led to officers

"breaking down in tears" and their families being abused in the streets around the prison.

The mass refusal to work on sickness grounds halted life inside one of Europe's largest prisons with the 1,300 inmates locked in their cells for most of the day and work and education classes cancelled. Prison officers are legally banned from taking industrial action and the "mass sickie" was widely seen as an attempt to get round the law.

More than 80 governor grade and other managerial staff from other London prisons and from Prison Service headquarters were drafted in

to run the segregation unit — scene of most of the alleged brutality incidents — and other parts of the prison.

The Director-General of the Prison Service, Richard Tilt, said yesterday "it was not a huge coincidence" that so many prison officers had reported in sick. "We must assume that this is a protest action," he said.

Solicitors, Hickman Rose, acting for the inmates, yesterday gave the Metropolitan police a dossier detailing the allegations which have led to the suspension of eight prison officers and a senior manager. Lawyers also went to

the jail to take statements arising from new allegations.

Ron Adams, the POA's vice-chairman, insisted that those who had gone sick were genuinely unwell. "Our members were off sick. There is no alleged about it. A lot of people have been stressed out about the situation that has existed here. Their families have been abused. People have been calling their fathers and mothers 'bullies' because they have worked at Wormwood Scrubs," he said.

He added prison staff had been treated shabbily by the Prison Service. "We saw some of our members yesterday breaking down in tears because of what happened."

POA officials said they did not want to oppose the suspension of the accused officers. Last night they said the new governor, Stephen Moore, had agreed increased levels of supervision in "particularly sensitive areas" so our members feel protected from unsubstantiated and malicious allegations.

It is expected that the prison will now return to normal. "Hopefully some of our members might be feeling better in the next day or two," said Mr Adams.

The Prison Service was alarmed by the protest action, with Mr Tilt saying the refusal to report for duty "did nothing to enhance the reputation of prison officers."

"Wormwood Scrubs has an important role to play and the support of all his staff in running this large and very complex prison. I recognise that the current investigation has unsettled many staff but the way forward is to have the allegations properly and externally investigated."

He added that support was being made available for staff who were "genuinely suffering from stress."

Hamas vows to avenge killing of its leader

David Sharrock on fears that extremist's demise will provoke suicide bombs in Israel

THE militant Islamic group Hamas last night vowed to avenge the assassination of its master bomb-maker, Muhi al-Din Sharif, whose sinister slaying this week seems destined to lead to further suicide attacks on Israel's streets.

Undisguised glee in some Israeli quarters at the violent fate of an extremist accused of overseeing at least five bombings has fanned fury among Palestinians, who smell a plot by Shin Bet, the Israeli secret security force, to dispose of one of their most wanted targets and then blame his demise on his own people.

The circumstances of the death of Muhi al-Din Sharif, who bore the nom de guerre of "Engineer Two", are murky, but the consequences could be chillingly straightforward.

Sharif belonged to the military wing of Hamas, Izz al-Din al-Qassam, which has carried out more than a dozen suicide attacks in Israel since 1994. "Hamas pledges to our martyred leader... that the martyrs will continue to fight the occupier," a leaflet issued yesterday stated, promising further attacks.

Their 32-year-old leader went to the martyrs' paradise on Sunday evening in the West Bank town of Ramallah, 10 miles north of Jerusalem. The sky was lit up by an explosion as a car bomb detonated.

At first it was believed that the bomber had killed himself as he made the Ford Escort ready for a busy street in Jerusalem.



The mother of Muhi al-Din Sharif displaying a picture of him in 1996, when he was on the run

PHOTOGRAPH: ANWAR ANWAR

However, a Palestinian pathologist, Jalal Jabara, concluded yesterday that Sharif was shot twice in the chest and once in a leg about three hours before the blast and died from the bullet wounds.

Palestinian police later said that the car bomb had been triggered by remote control. The Palestinian

planning minister, Nabil Shaath, pointed the finger at Israel, saying: "This is just another new crime, a new assassination carried out by Israel, murdering someone and then placing him in a car and then detonating the car."

The Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, denied Israeli involvement.

"I have only incomplete information about this incident, but I can tell you categorically that Israel has nothing to do with it," he said.

Efraim Sneh, an Israeli opposition MP, said it did not matter who had killed Engineer Two. "Whoever brought his demise serves all praise and the

thanks of all of Israel," he said.

He had perhaps forgotten the legacy of the assassination by Israeli secret services of Sharif's predecessor and mentor Yabya Ayyash, the original "Engineer Two", killed by a booby-trapped mobile telephone after a deadly four-year game of cat-and-mouse.

'Muhi al-Din is gone, but tens will replace him. Jihad will continue'

Ayyash's murder prompted a revenge killing spree by Hamas's military wing. Four suicide bombings in eight days in February and March 1996 killed 55 people. The scope of the slaughter altered the course of the Middle East peace process, giving the rightwing Mr Netanyahu — who promised tough security measures — the narrowest of general election victories over Labour's Shimon Peres.

Sharif, an electrician, was believed by Israeli security forces to be Izz al-Din al-Qassam's military commander in the West Bank. He went on the run in August 1995, narrowly escaping in his pyjamas from his home as an arrest party closed in.

Sharif was accused of having masterminded up to five suicide bombings, including the two attacks which killed 24 people last summer in Jerusalem's central market and its busiest pedestrian street.

Shin Bet claims he was training a new generation of bombers who advocate attacks on Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority if they persist in co-operating with Israel.

Sharif's brother Ibrahim had no doubt that the murder was the work of the Zionists. "Muhi al-Din is gone, but tens will replace him," he said. "Yabya Ayyash has gone, thousands will replace him. Jihad will continue."

Israel yesterday adopted a 20-year-old UN resolution calling for Israel to withdraw its troops from south Lebanon but linked the pull-out to "required security arrangements" — a guarantee by Lebanon that it would deploy troops to prevent cross-border guerrilla attacks.

Lebanon and Syria rejected the Israeli initiative, saying that a 1978 Security Council Resolution forbids an unconditional Israeli withdrawal.

Leader comment, page 9

Britain could relieve Third World debt, MPs told

David Pallister

BRITAIN could easily cancel the debts owing from the world's 28 poorest countries, the chairman of the Treasury select committee, Giles Radice, was told yesterday at a meeting with campaigners for international debt relief.

Experts from the broad coalition, Jubilee 2000, presented new research showing that the total debt of £1.4bn

represents less than the government subsidy to the Channel Tunnel rail link.

One of the coalition partners, the World Development Movement, has calculated that the first 14 highly indebted countries could have their UK debts cancelled outright with the amount that Britain reimbursed to arms exporters since 1994 for non-payment of bills by Third World countries.

The coalition, representing 73 pressure groups, is seeking

to have the backing of unpayable debts — those that will never be recovered — written off by the millennium.

The meeting with Mr Radice in the House of Commons was an attempt to open up a new front in the campaign, highlighting the fact that the Treasury holds the purse strings while questions of debt and aid are handled by the International Development Department.

"Cancelling all poor countries' debts would have

an effect many times greater than the cost," said Jessica Woodroffe, WDM's head of campaigns.

Some aid agencies believe Treasury officials are less enthusiastic than their boss Gordon Brown, who has shown sympathy for debt forgiveness in advance of the G8 summit in Birmingham next month, when it will be high on the agenda. Last September in his "Mauritius Manifesto", he announced the cancellation of £132m bilateral

debt for the lower-income Commonwealth countries.

Next week Mr Brown and Ms Short will give evidence to the Commons international development committee, which is planning to publish its own report on debt relief two days before the summit.

At Tuesday's committee hearing, Oxfam also urged Britain to take a lead in reforming the debt forgiveness initiative of the World Bank and the IMF. Kevin Watkins, Oxfam's policy ad-

viser, told the committee the process should be speeded up if countries promised to spend 80 per cent of the money on health and education. At present, the countries likely to be eligible generally have to go through six years of austerity programmes before they qualify.

After the meeting Ms Woodroffe said: "Mr Radice was very sympathetic and said the world would raise in the committee the possibility of doing a study on debt."

There's gripping... and then there's

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IN BOOKSHOPS NOW

World Cup wipeout

Football fever leaves rest of world with nil

Don Glickster
Arts Correspondent

IT IS a gargantuan battle. On one side the large, scaly and really rather frightening figure of Godzilla. On the other a diminutive yet powerful rooster called Footix. Yet in this unlikely David and Goliath battle, the nimble Footix looks set to lick the lumbering Godzilla.

Footix is the official mascot for this summer's World Cup in France. Godzilla is Columbia TriStar's blockbuster "event movie" for the year. But Godzilla will have to wait his turn. Dismayed by the experience of previous years and the promised scale of interest in the World Cup, film distributors are frantically changing the release dates for films to avoid clashing with the month-long football tournament.

But it is not just films. Record releases too will be down as retailers and record companies learn the lessons of Euro 96. And while publishers hope to reap the rewards of any football backlash, promoters of live events are busy installing television sets at the side of the stage to comfort the fans who just can't get enough.

Last year the summer blockbusters crowded cinema screens. Jurassic Park, the Lost World, Batman & Robin, and Con Air brought the crowds in to multiplexes during July. But this year, things will be different. Godzilla, The Truman Show and Armageddon — this summer's three big blockbusters — will be released either just before the World Cup gets under way on June 10 with Brazil, the holders, facing Scotland, or after the final in Paris on July 12.

Instead, British cinema audiences will have to make do with a romantic drama called Hotel De Love and The Apostle, starring Robert De Niro. Women and children are the audience being targeted by the studios, relying on the World Cup appealing just to men. Disney's The Little Mermaid will be re-released, while Polygram are pushing out the children's movie Barney's Great Adventure on June 26, the last day of the tournament's first stage.

The other audience per-

ceived to be averse to football — women — is being targeted with Bush, starring Jessica Lange on June 19, and 6 Days, 7 Nights, a drama starring Harrison Ford, on July 3. World Cup quarter-final day, in music, record companies and retailers are bracing themselves for a quiet month. During Euro 96 and the last World Cup in 1994, retail sales slumped. The month of USA 94 coincided with a 5.5 per cent fall in album sales. There were also fewer new releases, with 135 new chart entries in the month, compared with 144 the previous month. During Euro 96 album sales declined by 3.7 per cent.

A spokesman for the independent retailer Adrians said: "If the public is watching the box for a month there is nothing really we can do to stop them."



Tournament will eclipse most other cultural events

Despite a predicted retail slump, publishers are not changing their plans for what is a key period for them as the year's best novels start to sell. A spokeswoman for HarperCollins said: "We haven't changed our programme to account for the World Cup, apart from publishing a series of World Cup books."

Both publishers and record companies are hoping to cash in on the World Cup with special releases. A well-known World Cup book featuring the usual star names — Hodge, Gullit, Shearer — should sustain the publishers through any drop in sales, while record companies are vying to release 1998's Three Lions. Leading contender is a reworked version of Three

Lions, while the official England release will be Ian McCulloch's (How Does It Feel To Be) On Top Of The World. This should not be confused with Chumbawamba's On Top Of The World, released at the same time.

Away from the high street, the live performers will be the most vulnerable. For some this may not matter too much. The Rolling Stones have the misfortune, or perhaps fortune, to be playing in Edinburgh on the night Scotland face Norway. Expect vast screens broadcasting the match.

The same goes for T In The Park, the rock festival held at Balado near Kinross on the weekend of July 11, the World Cup's final two days. Organisers are arranging for TV relays of the football to the distract the live audience.

For large-scale events, such as the Glastonbury Festival, which also plans television relays of the football, it may not be a problem. But spare a thought for the Dundee Jazz Festival, which goes up against Scotland's opening game against Brazil on June 10, or the Glasgow Jazz Festival, which runs from June 26 to July 5. Organisers there plan to run an event aimed at women and children on July 4, while a spokeswoman admitted: "The idea is to get people to book before they work out there is a clash."

The Meltdown music festival at London's South Bank Centre has been programmed by football-mad John Peel. TV monitors will be set up to carry the games in the venue's foyers.

Theatres, like publishing, have decided to tough it out. West End producer Bill Kenwright said: "We have to plan so far ahead in booking theatres, actors, crew, that we just have to go on... I have a big wall chart and there's a big circle around the World Cup. The situation is serious but not hopeless. What will I be doing? Watching the football, of course."

But there could be comfort for the football sceptics from all places, Brazil. "There is always an audience for films in Brazil. Not everyone is interested in football," said one Brazilian distributor. Four Weddings And A Funeral, a huge hit in Brazil, was released during the last World Cup, won by Brazil.

Relegation zones

Some main arts events affected by the World Cup



- June 10 Dundee Jazz Festival clashes with the opening Brazil v Scotland match as do Lizs Hannell at the Royal Albert Hall and Shirley Bassey at the Royal Festival Hall.
- June 16 The Rolling Stones at Edinburgh Murrayfield stadium clashes with Scotland v Norway.
- July 17 Royal Ballet opens season at London Coliseum, clashing with semi-finals.
- July 11-12 T In The Park v World Cup final weekend. Where will you be?



- Godzilla has trotted off to the end of July, followed by The Truman Show starring Robin Williams.
- Lethal Weapon 4 and The X-Files movie will both open in August, all due out late June in the US.



- Glasgow Jazz Festival's Hitchhiker's Guide to Jazz, aimed at women and children on July 4.
- Glastonbury Festival installs giant TV screens to head off clash with top-of-the-second stage matches, June 26-28.



Books featuring stars such as Alan Shearer, top, will help publishers through a lean month as, clockwise from right, the Rolling Stones, Polygram's Barney, the Glastonbury Festival and Disney's Little Mermaid either yield to the soccer leviathan or seek other audiences. SHEARER PHOTOGRAPH: MARK LEECH

Lottery operator Camelot dumps US shareholder

Kamal Ahmed
Media Correspondent

THE COMPANY whose chairman was found guilty of trying to bribe Richard Branson has been dumped as a shareholder in Camelot, the lottery operator. Gtech, which has been battered by bad publicity following the allegations concerning Guy Snowden, agreed to sell its 22.5 per cent share in Camelot to the other main shareholders. Camelot said the decision was the "right response to the public mood".

In a separate move, the Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, yesterday announced a five-strong Lottery Commission would replace the post of lottery regulator. Camelot has been struggling to restore its reputation after it became entangled in

the bribery allegations against Mr Snowden who led the Camelot bid to run the lottery and was a director of the company until his resignation in February.

Mr Snowden also resigned as chairman of Gtech after a libel jury found against him over the bribery allegations.

Demands that Gtech sever all links with the lottery have not been met. The American company, which received \$51 million for its shareholding, will still be paid by Camelot for providing the lottery machines where millions buy their tickets every week.

Oflot, the Government-appointed regulator, is still investigating whether the company is fit and proper to have any relationship with Camelot. An announcement is expected next week.

"Camelot believes this is the right response to the pub-

'We believe this is the right response to the public mood for a largely British-owned operator of the lottery'

lic mood for a largely British-owned operator of the National Lottery, and that it is in the best interests of lottery players," a statement from Camelot said. "Gtech will continue to act as a supplier to Camelot of the lottery systems and services."



"This change enables them to fulfil the same role they efficiently undertake in two-thirds of the world's lotteries," Chris Smith welcomed Camelot's decision, describing it as "sensitive to the public mood". His announcement of a new

lottery commission comes after the previous director-general of Oflot, Peter Davis, resigned over the Guy Snowden affair. Mr Davis had accepted free flights from Gtech while visiting America to look at lotteries.

Mr Branson, head of the Virgin empire, who said Mr Snowden had tried to bribe him to pull out of the race to run the lottery, also said Mr Davis had failed to investigate his claims adequately.

Mr Davis's successor at Oflot, John Stoker, said he would co-operate fully in making the transition to the commission as smooth as possible. "It is the Government's intention to ensure that the public has complete confidence in the operation and regulation of the lottery," he said.

The commission will have five members and will be ser-

viced by Oflot. Its introduction will reduce the risk, actual or perceived, of conflicts of interest and remove the focus on an individual.

The Culture Secretary said the commission would also protect against the danger of the regulator becoming too close to the industry being regulated.

The changes will be introduced as amendments to the Lottery Bill which receives its second reading in the Commons next week.

The new commission would involve "little extra cost". The Gtech share buyout means Camelot is now owned by four companies: Cadbury Schweppes, the drinks and confectionery giant, De La Rue, the money printers, and technology firm Racal each own nearly 27 per cent of the shares, while computer firm ICL owns 20 per cent.

Blair and Ahern enter final lap with Downing St talks

continued from page 1

They lay territorial claim to Northern Ireland, and alterations are essential for Ulster Unionists' agreement to a deal. The Irish are prepared to move on the issue, but want to retain the aspiration to Irish unity in its constitution.

Mr Taylor accused Dublin of dragging its feet. He said the talks were deadlocked until the issue of constitutional change was resolved, and claimed that the Irish were to blame.

Liz O'Donnell, junior foreign affairs minister, was furious. She called Mr Taylor's comments "politically immature". She said: "They are particularly unhelpful at this late stage in the negotiations. We have a week to go of the negotiations and it is not conducive to finding agreement if one party is holding out a

piece of the negotiations and making that a pre-condition for negotiations generally."

As the nationalist SDLP warned that a deal was still some way off, Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein's president, called on Mr Mitchell to take the lead.

Mr Mitchell's document could break the sense of frustration at Stormont. The parties are looking forward to it because it gets them off the hook when it comes to stopping posturing. The hope is that it will enable parties to get down to negotiating. Irish civil servants involved in the peace talks meanwhile were yesterday threatened by the Loyalist Volunteer Force. The group said its "active service units" were poised to take action against civil servants at Stormont and the Anglo-Irish secretariat at Maryfield in east Belfast.

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4 BRITAIN

Crash hero pilot warns passengers to listen to pre-flight safety drill

Martin Wainwright

THE pilot whose split-second decision to crash-land his burning aircraft saved Leeds United from catastrophe at Stansted airport described the incident yesterday as a warning to all passengers.

Captain John Hackett, 61, who defied company policy to land his BAe 748 when an engine exploded, said that far too many travellers ignored cabin crew's pre-flight safety demonstrations.

He singled out the Leeds assistant manager, David O'Leary, 40, who forced open an emergency door and marshalled passengers out, for being "one of the few passengers who actually listened to the cabin staff's safety announcement".

When the plane's right-hand wing was engulfed in flames at 150ft, a few seconds after take-off, Mr O'Leary, a former Arsenal fire defender, "remembered everything said in the emergency

briefing and actually assisted the evacuation".

The pilot also praised his three crew, saying that he was embarrassed at being singled out as a hero when the credit belonged to the whole Emerald Airlines team. They had acted immediately when he abandoned standing company policy to circle and tackle the emergency, and instead took the plane straight down.

A stewardess, Nicola Mee, who had flown for only three weeks, was singled out for praise by her senior colleague, Helen Dutton, who also said that too few passengers listened to the safety drill.

David O'Leary came up afterwards and said he would like to thank Nicola. She had actually gone down before he took off and pointed out to the passengers over the wing, including him, how to open the exits in an emergency.

Captain Hackett, a father of two from Leek, Staffordshire, said that the handling of the emergency was "a concerted

team effort", with Ms Dutton and First Officer Garry Lucas also behaving in an exemplary way. He said that Mr Lucas, 33 and from Liverpool, "was out of his seat in the flash of an eye and assisting in opening doors and getting people off".

He apologised that some of the 40 passengers on the charter flight to Leeds, laid on for the United team, officials and corporate guests after a 3-0 defeat at West Ham, had been forced to jump from the plane's upstilt tail. Unfortunately, what was left of the runway was just a little too short.

A Britannia Airways pilot was praised yesterday after he landed his Boeing 767 and 274 passengers on one engine after the other burst into flames 25 minutes out of Abu Dhabi. Keith Harper writes.

The passengers were on their way to Gatwick after a holiday in the Maldives islands. An airline spokesman said that Captain Ian Thomas had done everything by the book.

Scientists search for BSE 'clue' in plants

James McKie

SCIENTISTS are testing potatoes and the leaves of the daisy, toadflax, bindweed and other English plants to see whether they played a part in the BSE epidemic because cows ate them.

Government-funded institutes conducting experiments are also hoping to discover chemicals in the plants that offer clues for a cure for the disease as well as its cause.

Stephen Dealler, a critic of Government's handling of the crisis, has spent £23,000 of his own money on similar work with a Bradford University researcher because he thought chemicals in the plants may have helped transform proteins thought to be a factor in BSE. But chemicals in the same family might inhibit the spread of the disease too.

Dr Dealler, a consultant microbiologist at Burnley general hospital, Lancashire, told the BSE inquiry yesterday how schoolchildren had helped collect flowers for experiments but the work took too much time from medical duties.

He had had the idea after visiting researchers in Kew Gardens, London, who were looking at chemicals that could prevent or alter the way sugars worked on viruses and might stem HIV and other diseases.

He decided to see whether

The possibility remains that chemicals found in these plants could be both a cause and a cure.

similar chemicals were found in plants that might be eaten by cows. Previous ministers did not want to fund such work because it was a risk from eating cow tissues.

The experiments were being continued at the Institute of Grassland Research, Aberystwyth, and the Institute of Animal Health, Compton, Berkshire.

The major finding so far was that potato peelings contained large amounts of the chemicals. "Indeed the compounds were in such a large amount as to be expected to cause effects if an animal ate them in reasonable amounts." The possibility remained that chemicals found in the plants could be both a cause and a cure.

Rob Nash, of the Aberystwyth Institute, who had been doing work independently of Dr Dealler but was now using extracts from his plants, said: "Although it would be interesting to know whether these cause the initial change in the protein to make it infective, now we are rather more interested in cures".

He had tried unsuccessfully to get research council funding. "I think they thought this was a bit of a wacky idea." The experiments were still in their early stages and would involve seeing how the chemicals worked in the guts of animals. The idea of chemicals on certain plants being a factor in BSE might help explain why it did not occur widely in other countries, he suggested.

Livestock trade rejects ban on sheep exports

Peter Hetherington

THE Minister of Agriculture was yesterday at the centre of a dispute with Britain's sheep exporters after urging them to halt the shipment of live animals to the Continent for the principal Muslim festival.

Jack Cunningham's intervention marks a toughening stand by the Government over a trade in which an estimated 12,000 sheep a week have been exported from the south coast over the past month — some destined for the festival of Eid-ul-Kabir next week, which marks the end of Ramadan.

The ministry made it clear last night that it was pressing the European Commission to

ban all shipments, but in an angry response the British Association of Sheep Exporters accused it of threatening British jobs by attempting to suppress the welfare lobby.

Islamic organisations were also outraged. The association was alarmed by a recent statement from the animal welfare minister, Elliot Morley — followed by Dr Cunningham's appeal — which claimed that abattoirs around Paris could not cope with "the large number of animals people want to slaughter during the festival".

This had led to sheep being inexpertly killed without stunning and "sometimes with blunt knives".

In a letter to the association's secretary, Kevin Feakins, Dr Cunningham wrote:

"It must be the case that those who care about their stock would not wish them to be exported for slaughter in this way."

But the Islamic Foundation, Britain's leading Muslim research organisation, accused him of writing from ignorance.

In a letter to Dr Cunningham yesterday, it pointed out that the use of blunt knives was illegal in the Islamic world. "An apology would be appropriate," a spokesman said. The foundation argues that the halal method of slaughtering is far more humane than killing animals with a stun gun, which merely "internalised pain". Several abattoirs in Britain were already dedicated to halal meat.

Fog 'fools' drivers into going too fast

Ten Stafford Science Editor

PSYCHOLOGISTS may have solved the mystery of the murderous motorway pile-ups on foggy days. The drivers tearing through the mist believe that they are actually driving slowly.

Robert Snowden and colleagues at the University of Wales at Cardiff tested volunteers in a virtual driving simulator — with added fog. He said: "They were driving down a completely empty

road. We had a few simulated trees towards the side of the road and a dashed white line down the centre."

They tested the volunteers on clear sunny roadways and foggy ones, and asked them to assess when they were travelling at the "same" speed on each. In fact, they were driving faster in foggy weather than they thought. The fogger the road ahead, the faster they drove.

The research confirms a perception mystery first identified 16 years ago, and could answer questions about the

sites of the brain that register contrast and speed. But if confirmed, it could lead to road safety planners.

When visibility is poor, the scientists say in Nature today, drivers are reluctant to take their eyes off the road for fear of missing that moment when something looms out of the fog. So drivers would be more likely to rely on their own perception of speed.

There were other factors at work. One of those was that if an object seemed hazy, then the viewer tended to assume that it was far away.

Businessman refused grant feels taken for a ride

A GOVERNMENT training agency apologised yesterday for giving a debt-ridden businessman the shock of his life when he boarded a number 51 bus, writes Martin Wainwright.

Still smarting from his failure to get a seedcorn grant from Leeds Training and Enterprise Council, Tony Hargessell was astonished to see his own photograph beaming from a TEC advert on the Yorkshire double-decker, above.

"Support from TEC New Enterprises has made me realise my dream and got my business underway," the caption told travellers.

"Nothing could be further from the truth," said Mr Hargessell yesterday, contemplating life at 44 with a broken marriage and £12,000 owed to creditors. The TEC, part of a national network, had actually pulled the rug on his business, he said. Now a van driver, Mr Har-

gessell said that Leeds TEC officials had initially encouraged him to seek £2,000 for computer equipment to launch his infant design firm. At the same time, he said, he had been pointed out to illustrate TEC promotional material.

Later he was told his cash flow was unrealistic and his business plan unworkable. Mr Hargessell said he blamed the TEC for the failure of his company because they had offered "just waffle, not cash".



Pincer movement... a pregnant lobster is marked by tail-clipping before being released to help boost the species in the North Sea. PHOTOGRAPH: PETER BYRNE

Ministry aims to trap 10,000 lobsters to bump up North Sea stocks

Martin Wainwright

THE Government went to market yesterday to buy no less than 10,000 pregnant lobsters. The crustaceans — six of which have already been bought for a tenner each — will restock inshore fishing grounds in the North Sea.

The first half-dozen were lined up yesterday at Hull Marina to have a V-notch

clipped in their fan tails to mark them out as protected breeding stock.

In its pilot buy-back scheme the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will spend £100,000 in the next four years to acquire, mark and release egg-bearing lobsters caught between Tyneside and The Wash. "We are very concerned about stocks because of the increased time it's taking for fishermen to

build up a good lobster catch," said Alex Smith of the North Eastern Sea Fisheries Committee. "This project should see an increase of some 34,000 lobsters in the target area, within six miles of the coast."

Part-financed by the European fishery resources budget, the huge shellfish-buying spree will be phased to avoid an artificial hike in prices. Ministry buyers will pay

market rates — about £6 for 1lb. Bylaws are now in force imposing a maximum £5,000 fine and confiscation of equipment for those who trap the notched animals.

The first lobster group set sail late yesterday on North East Guardian 2, the committee's protection vessel. After their photocall, they were released off Spurn Head to start work on 34,000 descendants.

Girl to contest 'derisory' award

Straw joins outcry at £18,500 for loss of mother and sister in attack

Duncan Campbell Crime Correspondent

CALLS for a review of compensation payments to the victims of crime were made yesterday following the disclosure that Josie Russell, aged 12, who survived a violent attack in which her mother and sister died, had been awarded £18,500 for her loss.

Lawyers for the Russell family, MPs and victims' rights organisations called for a review of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority's fixed tariff for losses and injuries suffered as a result of crime. The Home Secretary said that the Russell family should appeal.

The girl was severely beaten in an attack in which her mother Lin, aged 45, and sister Megan, aged six, were both killed near their home in Chilenden in Kent in July 1998. Initially, it was feared that she might not survive, but she has made a remarkable recovery.

able recovery, having moved back to Wales with her lecturer father, Shaun.

The family's lawyer, Sarah Harman, said yesterday that there would be an appeal. Ms Harman said: "This is a derisory settlement and a very graphic example of the inadequacy of the scheme. 'The authority had the possibility here of exercising its discretion generously, and compensating Josie for the terrible loss of her mother and younger sister. It didn't take the opportunity, and gave the lowest possible level award'."

She added: "This is a child with very special needs who has lost her mother in dreadful circumstances. This award is to compensate her at the rate of £2,000 a year for the loss of her mother. A spokeswoman for Victim Support called yesterday for a review of the system, which was changed in 1996. She said it was insufficiently flexible. "The problem is that there is no discretion," she said. While victims always said



Josie Russell: has made a remarkable recovery

Past awards caused controversy

WITH applications submitted before the new system was introduced, victims of crime could claim significantly higher amounts from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority.

In 1996, a Midlands teacher who was attacked by a schoolgirl and left severely disabled, and had to take early retirement, won almost £95,000 in compensation.

Also in 1996, another teacher from Leamington Spa in Warwickshire was awarded £82,000 following an attack by a 10-year-old. In July 1997, Kyle Scholtz, aged 19, who had brain dam-

age through being shaken as a baby, was awarded £1.3 million after his adoptive parents pressed for compensation.

And the authority has not been without controversy: Wilf Ball, whose son, Jonathan, aged three, died in the Warrington IRA bomb blast in 1993, received only £5,000 for his suffering.

In 1996, five men who had been physically and sexually abused in childhood, appealed against the authority's refusal to compensate them because they had criminal convictions. They were given awards of up to £25,000.

For Dover, whose constituency includes the village of Chilenden, described the award as "inadequate, derisory and insulting", while Julian Brazier, Conservative MP for Canterbury in Kent, said: "This seems a very mean award."

The authority issued a statement yesterday to explain the system of compensation, adding that any applicant dissatisfied with a deci-

sion was entitled to have it reviewed. There was also the further possibility of an appeal to an independent panel.

According to the guidelines, loss of a parent entitles a child to £2,000 a year until the age of 18. A discretionary award may also be given for care costs. The authority receives 80,000 applications a year: in 60 per cent of cases, the victim receives some compensation.

Britons' living standards on the decline

EC statistics reveal job creation means lower wages for workers

Peter Hetherington

BRITAIN'S much-vaunted claim to be the job creation centre of Europe during the latter Conservative years was dented yesterday when new figures showed it had slipped further behind the European Union average for wealth.

Prosperity had deteriorated in every English region, as well as in Scotland and Northern Ireland, according to research undertaken for the European Commission.

Richard Caborn, minister for the regions last night, described the figures from the Eurostat agency, which cover the period 1993-5, as "a damning indictment of the Tories' record in government".

While the figures at first ap-

peared to contradict the last government's employment record, economists specialising in regional development said they merely underlined the downside of a deregulated, flexible labour market in which workers often paid the price for job creation with low wages.

Although the Government last night exploded the figures as an indictment of the Tories, Labour is similarly committed to a flexible market as a "third way" — in contrast to the continental model of regulation and, implicitly, higher wages and a shorter working week.

But the figures will strengthen the Government's hand in its battle with Brussels to avoid cuts in European Union regional funding.

One economist, Keith

Burge, of Newcastle-based Economic Research Services, cautioned that relatively high employment levels did not necessarily mean prosperity.

"These figures suggest that in terms of job creation there are a lot less well-paid areas of the economy. You can have falling unemployment without GDP rising."

Every two years the Eurostat agency produces figures for the European Commission which measure purchasing power per head. They set the performance of each member country against an average figure for the EU as a whole.

Against an EU average for wealth per head of 100, the UK slumped from 99 in 1993 to 96 in 1995 — the last date for which figures are available.

The figure for England matched the average ranking of 100 in 1993 but had slipped to 98 by 1995.

In Scotland, wealth fell from 97 to 96, and in Northern Ireland the figure of 80 in 1993

fell to 78 by 1995. Only in Wales did wealth per head hold steady at a level of 80.

Across the English region, Eurostat measured a fall in relative wealth.

Although growth per head in London is well above the EU average, it still fell from 147 on the index in 1993 to 139 by 1995 — underlining, yet again, the north-south divide.

In the South-East, the figure fell from 101 to 100 while in the South-West a rating of 94 fell over the two-year period to 93.

In the Eastern region, relative wealth fell from 94 to 91 while in the East Midlands it dropped from 94 to 91 and in the West Midlands — heartland of Britain's manufacturing industry — from 91 to 89.

In the North-East, wealth per head fell from 83 to 80, in the North West from 93 to 91

and in Merseyside from 75 to 71.

Publication of the figures comes as Mr Caborn pilots legislation through Parliament to establish nine regional development agencies in England to co-ordinate job creation and economic development.

The Commons environment committee recently urged the Government to give more powers to oversee training, tourism, and distribute grants to foreign companies setting up factories.

Mr Caborn said: "The [Eurostat] figures substantiate the case for... powerful development agencies and a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to economic under-performance in the English regions. They clearly demonstrate the performance of the regions has worsened."

'Unease' at living wills

Clare Dyer Legal Correspondent

EXPERTS in medical law yesterday accused critics of the Government's plans to make living wills binding by statute of misinterpreting the law.

Medical lawyers pointed out that living wills, or advance directives, are already binding on doctors as a result of court cases. Legislation would simply put them on a statutory footing.

Controversy over the proposal, made in a green paper, was stirred by a letter to the Telegraph yesterday from Catholic Church leaders who voiced "deep unease".

Living wills allow people to specify their wishes for future medical treatment — such as refusing to be put on a life support machine or to have artificial feeding — in cases where they would not be able to do so themselves.

Cardinal Basil Hume, Cardinal Thomas Winning, and Archbishop Sean Brady, heads of the Catholic Church in respectively, England and Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, wrote that the proposals "envisage the possibility of making legally binding even such a motivated refusal of medical treatment in advance of mental incompetence".

This would result in "grave injustice being perpetrated on some of the country's most

vulnerable people", they said.

But lawyers said that people who were mentally competent might refuse treatment under the current law even if it led to their deaths. Living wills would simply allow those who became mentally incapacitated the same right. They would not be able to compel doctors to do anything unlawful, such as euthanasia.

Margaret Brazier, professor of law at Manchester university, said it would not be sufficient for opponents of living wills to stop the consultation paper becoming a parliamentary bill. They would also need an act to reverse the court rulings that established that they are legally binding.

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صكرا من الامل

Stephen Lawrence inquiry told of neo-Nazi links as police at stabbing scene are accused of lying

Youths 'laughed at murder'

David Pollard

A CAR containing five laughing white youths — three of whom had been involved in previous racist activities — was seen by police driving up and down the street where the black teenager, Stephen Lawrence, lay bleeding to death, the inquiry into his murder was told yesterday.

Sergeant Nigel Clement said that he had noted part of the registration number and had radioed for the car to be stopped. But it was not. A later witness saw the battered red Vauxhall Astra again and took the details of the driver and his passenger.

In cross-examination, Ian McDonald QC, asked Sgt Clement if he had been aware that the driver, David Copley, had been convicted of threatening behaviour in connection with the 1991 attack on Nathan Adams, 14, and his brother, Rolan, 13. Rolan died from a knife wound after the assault by 15 youths.

His passenger, Keiran Highland, was said by McDonald, a leading member of a neo-Nazi group called NTO or Nazi Turnout, which frequented the Wild Fowler pub in Thamesmead, south-east London — a known haunt of racists.

Sgt Clement replied: "What you're telling me now is the first indication of that." Mr McDonald, representing Stephen's friend, Duwayne Brooks, who was with him at the time of the killing, then named a third man who was in the car on the night.

He said Jason Goarley had also been convicted of an offence in the Adams incident. "I was never aware of that," Sgt Clement replied. The Adams brothers had been walking home from a youth club on the Thamesmead estate near Eltham, where Stephen was killed, in April, 1993.

Five other youths were charged with Stephen's murder but none were convicted. Sgt Clement returned to the inquiry yesterday after being accused last week of lying about the time he arrived at the scene.

This allegation led the chairman, Sir William Macpherson, to adjourn the questioning of police witnesses to allow advance warning of criticism. Yesterday he and two other officers, including Inspector Steven Groves, in charge of the murder scene, were also accused of lying.

At one stage, in a series of prickly exchanges, Michael Mansfield QC, for the Lawrence family, told Inspector Groves: "This inquiry cannot rely on a single word you're saying. Do you think you're totally unreliable?" — "No, Sir."



Police insist that Lawrence (left) was given first aid by officers at the scene, despite suggestions to the contrary

News in brief

Infatuation led to boy's suicide

A SCHOOLBOY threw himself off the roof of his home because he could not cope with his infatuation for his girlfriend, an inquest at Winchester was told yesterday. Richard Lovell, aged 15, left five suicide notes suggesting he feared the relationship would end. He climbed on to the roof of the house then fell head first on to a stone path below, a police officer said. He died in hospital five days later. The Mid-Hampshire coroner, Graham Short, recorded a verdict of suicide.

His mother, Susan Lovell, said Richard started going out with the girl just before Christmas 1996. They had broken up last May but resumed their relationship shortly before Richard died. Mr Short said he had read Richard's diaries and it was clear that he feared the relationship was going to break up again. Notes written on the night he died made clear he planned to take his own life. "I don't think the girl concerned should blame herself for what has happened."

Bankrupt hid assets

DISGRACED businessman Terry Ramsden, once one of Britain's wealthiest men, admitted yesterday he had concealed property and shares after his companies crashed owing £100 million. Ramsden, aged 46, who is bankrupt, pleaded guilty at the Old Bailey to not disclosing an interest in a trust, concealing property worth £77,019 and not revealing he owned 3 million shares. He was jailed until May 5 when he is to be sentenced. Ramsden made a fortune as an international bond trader, but lost it because of gambling losses of about £100 million, when he was Britain's top racehorse owner.

Absolutely Friends

THE American sitcom Friends is to feature cameo roles for Jennifer Saunders and June Whitfield as the crew film in London this week. The pair from the BBC comedy Absolutely Fabulous visited a north London studio where filming on Friends has been continuing since Monday.

Also featuring in the hour-long episode, to be aired in June on Sky 1, will be pop star Louise, and British actors Tom Conti and Hugh Laurie. Last week Virgin boss Richard Branson and the Duchess of York filmed scenes for the comedy, which centres on a group of 20-something New York pals.

Violin's sale sets record

A STRADIVARI violin (right) was sold yesterday for £247,500 — the highest price ever paid for a musical instrument, according to Christie's in London.



Everett widow sues

THE former wife of the late Kenny Everett told a judge yesterday she was "horrified and appalled" when Woman's Own magazine broke its promise not to publish an article about her relationship with the outrageous gay broadcaster without her approval. Lee Everett-Alkin said that after Everett's death from Aids in April 1995 she agreed to be interviewed by the magazine — which she had been brought up to believe was "limiting patterns and niceness" — after being assured she would have the right of veto.

Nightlife equality

Club ladies' nights ruled sexist

Kamal Ahmed Media Correspondent

IT COULD mark the end of rum and blackcurrant and dancing around handbags. Ladies' nights, the nightclub industry's effort to encourage women into clubs with cheap tickets and drinks, have been banned by the Equal Opportunities Commission.



Fun while it lasted... special nightclub discounts for women only must end to comply with the Sex Discrimination Act

In a letter sent to nightclubs, the EOC, the government body charged with ensuring fair treatment of men and women, said the special evenings contravened the Sex Discrimination Act and should be halted. The EOC said it acted after receiving nearly 100 complaints over the past year from men angry at having to pay extra for their pint of lager.

The ruling came to light after Channel 5 was told to pull advertisements for two clubs offering cut-price admission to women. The order came from the Independent Television Commission which received a complaint that the adverts were sexist.

The ITC, the body which oversees television advertising, referred the complaint to the EOC, which said it was discriminatory against men to offer drinks at half price or free entry to women.

"We have received a lot of complaints about this from men, and we are duty bound to investigate when there is a complaint about sexual discrimination," said Kim Scanlon, head of the social advice team of the EOC which deals with complaints. "We do not want to get heavy-handed about this, but the act was passed by Parliament. You can imagine that for men who go to clubs regularly a 55 difference between ticket prices is a significant one."

In the adverts on Channel 5's text service, the Gass Club in Leicester offered "Ladies Free £4.11pm/Gents £10" and Legends nightclub in Essex offered "Admission £5, Ladies 1/2 Price". Both adverts have now been pulled.

TV green series grossly unfair

Channel 4 must apologise over programmes that distorted truth

Kamal Ahmed Media Correspondent

CHANNEL 4 will make an on-screen apology about one of its most controversial programmes after a television watchdog roundly condemned it as distorted and misleading.

The Independent Television Commission said that the Against Nature series, which accused the environmental movement of being akin to the Third Reich, had selectively edited interviews to give a deceptive picture of green issues. In an unusual move which revealed the anger of the ITC, the regulatory body said that Channel 4 must televisé apologies to Peter Melchett, the chief executive of Greenpeace, Tony Juniper, campaigns director of Friends of the Earth, Barbara Maas of the Pan-African Wildlife Conservation Network, and Norman Myers of Green College, Oxford.

All had their views distorted by the series which claimed that the environmental lobby in developed nations was trying to keep the rest of the world under-developed by opposing projects such as dam schemes and other technological advances.

"I have never experienced, in more than 30 years of television, an interview in which I said one thing, then was cut to make it seem as if I had said something else," Lord Melchett said. "The programmes were inaccurate, anti-environmentalist propaganda."

Writing to David Scott, managing director of Channel 4, Lord Melchett said the ITC agreed that he had been "deceived" about the series' purpose. Greenpeace had been told that the series would "broadly consider scientific advancement, population and the environment."

Friends of the Earth were equally scathing about the series broadcast last November, saying they had been stitched up by the programme-makers. RDF Television, "The series was badly made, and thoroughly shoddy in its use of facts," said Ian Willmore, FoE spokesman.

All Go for summer cut-price air fares war on key European routes

Keith Harper Transport Editor

THE summer battleground for a low-cost European air fares war was set yesterday when British Airways' new no-frills airline, Go, announced £100 return flights to Rome, Milan and Copenhagen.

The flights from Stansted will begin on May 22 to Rome, May 23 to Milan, and June 5 to Copenhagen. The £100 fare, which includes airport taxes, and cheap coach connections, will last for about two months. It will then be replaced by a more "sophisticated" structure, but the £100 offer will be kept as the dominant fare. BA's standard return fare to Rome is about £300.

Ms Barbara Cessari, Go's chief executive, said it would operate two daily return flights to the three destinations, and passengers would get food and drink on board for which they would have to pay. "Low price will not mean low service. We have excellent staff and we are hoping to encourage people who have not previously travelled in Europe to fly with us."

The announcement is likely to pave the way for another round of price cuts among low-cost carriers. But Sir Michael Bishop, chairman of British Midland, warned of at least one casualty over the next year. He picked out the heavy loss-maker, Debonair, operating from Luton, which is on a head-to-head with Go on the Rome route, as the most likely victim.

Judges 'punish' Lightning strike

Stuart Miller

EVEN Peter Alliss would have struggled to find words to describe this shot.

Lying in the rough 140 yards from the green behind a 10ft high copse, Anthony Lightning pulled out his eight-iron and went for glory over the trees.

Except he did not quite make it. His heavily sliced shot hit a tree, deflected at right angles and hit a player standing almost 90 yards away on the next fairway.

It could happen to anybody who ventured on to a fairway. But yesterday shock waves were sent through clubhouses after the Court of Appeal ruled that golfers were liable for injuries caused by wayward shots — no matter how unlikely the circumstances of the accident.

society
Every Wednesday in the
The Guardian

The dirt dredged through here — the illegitimacy revelation, the Roman Polanski rape case, the associations with Heidi Fleiss and other unsavouries, the paternity suits — strongly suggest some excessive costs in the pact Jack Nicholson, who calls himself 'Dr Devil', seems to have made.

Books, G2 page 8

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Russia 'stares into abyss'

James Meek in Moscow

NEARLY three-quarters of Russia's budget will go on servicing its debts unless radical policy changes are made, Russia's prime minister is warning, Sergei Kiriyenko, warned yesterday.

In an apocalyptic sermon to the upper house of parliament yesterday, he warned regional leaders of the disastrous state of the economy.

The little-known, 35-year-old, nominated for the post by President Boris Yeltsin but still to win the backing of the communist-patriotic bloc in parliament, said a quarter of Russians lived below subsistence level.

In a harsh attack on his predecessor, Viktor Chernomyrdin, who regularly claimed that the economy was growing, Mr Kiriyenko said: "There is practically not a single person in Russia today who would feel, as an individual, the economic growth of

which the previous government spoke."

Russia's foreign debt stood at more than \$78 billion in January. Rescheduling delayed repayment until this year, and in 2003 Moscow is due to start paying back the billions borrowed by the Soviet Union.

The backlog of unpaid wages has grown inexorably. The private sector owes employees \$5.7 billion, while the state sector owes \$700 million in wages. The backlog of pensions in both sectors has reached \$3.8 billion.

Meanwhile, the popular daily newspaper *Kommunisticheskaya Pravda* reported yesterday that the presidential administration was secretly spending millions of pounds on an exclusive leisure centre, including indoor tennis courts, weights and a sauna inside the Kremlin.

Yesterday's speech was the acting prime minister's first big policy statement. He echoed the complaints of his natural opponents about the impoverishment of Russia.

Living on the never never



Kiriyenko: "The principle is to live within our means"

- Russia's foreign debt is \$78 billion;
- Privatised industries owe their employees \$5.7 billion;
- The state sector owes its workers \$700 million;
- The backlog of pensions in both sectors has reached \$3.8 billion. The Russian Pension Fund currently has only 71 per cent of the money it needs.

while setting the stage for the Thatcherite measures which he will undoubtedly pursue to bring government spending into line with earnings.

He wooed communist-patriots with a pledge that the state would not sell its controlling share in big monopolies such as the gas giant Gazprom and the federal electricity system,

and promised an end to the Russian government's "collective irresponsibility".

Mr Yeltsin responded to parliamentary demands for consultation on the nomination with an offer to meet the speakers of both houses in his country residence today.

The lower house, the Duma, is due to vote on the prime

minister's nomination tomorrow. If it rejects his candidacy, Mr Yeltsin can reshuffle his name two more times.

If the Duma turns him down on all three occasions, the president can dissolve parliament and call new elections.

The whiff of crisis in the corridors of power stems from the fact that until a prime minister is confirmed, the Russian constitution does not make clear who would take over as head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces if Mr Yeltsin died or became incapacitated.

The Duma speaker, Gennady Seleznev, said deputies might debate the nomination tomorrow and vote on Wednesday.

Yegor Stroyev, the upper house speaker, said yesterday that the speakers, Mr Yeltsin and Mr Kiriyenko would "definitely reach an agreement" today at the president's residence.

Mr Stroyev said the upper house, the Federation Council, had no constitutional right to nominate its own candidate.

Meeting on Monday, the Communists and two strong allied parliamentary groups seemed to come to no firm conclusion as to whether they would vote against Mr Kiriyenko or abstain.

But yesterday a statement was released in the name of the same alliance calling Mr Kiriyenko "an incompetent, third-rate bureaucrat".

The Communist leader, Gennady Zyuganov, has taken care to attack Mr Yeltsin's nominee as inexperienced, rather than as an implacable ideological enemy of the communist-patriots, strengthening the suspicion that he has no intention of giving the president an opportunity to dissolve parliament by opposing Mr Kiriyenko.

The Russian media, which were struggling to find anything controversial to say about the obscure former businessman from Nizhny Novgorod, picked up a report yesterday from a German newspaper saying that Mr Kiriyenko had once flirted with Scientology.

World news in brief

Mandela aide says coup report 'flawed'

A REPORT by South Africa's military which implicated leading figures in the ruling party in a plot to overthrow the government was flawed and generally false, a spokesman for President Nelson Mandela said yesterday.

Joel Ntshenzhe said elements of the report might be true and would be investigated further but the overall premise of the report — that top African National Congress officials in the military and government were involved in a plot to destabilise the country — was wrong.

Another spokesman, Parks Mankahlana, said a judicial commission appointed by Mr Mandela last Friday had found problems with the entire compilation process. Mr Mandela received the commission's report on Wednesday. — AP, Pretoria.

Briton hurt by mine blast

A BRITISH diplomat was injured in Cambodia yesterday when two landmines exploded under a helicopter carrying Western journalists, diplomats and government troops as it landed at a remote temple which has been handed over to troops by Khmer Rouge defectors. No one was killed but three people — including Lawrence Pickup, deputy head of Britain's diplomatic mission — were injured. All were discharged after medical treatment.

The Soviet-built Mi-8 transport helicopter, carrying at least 44 people, was supposed to land at a helipad but came down in a mine field in strong winds. — AP, Cambodia.

EU envoys to visit Tibet

CHINA has agreed to allow European Union envoys to spend a week in Tibet looking at the human rights situation there, a British Foreign Office minister said yesterday.

Derek Fitchett said he hoped the delegation, consisting of the British, Austrian and Luxembourg ambassadors in Beijing, would be able to meet religious leaders and ordinary Tibetans during the visit next month. The EU pressed for the visit because of its concerns about repression of Buddhist clergy and the reported large-scale migration of ethnic Han Chinese into Tibet, an autonomous region of China. — Reuters.

I'm no fraidy cat, says Ramos

PRESIDENT Fidel Ramos of the Philippines said yesterday that he was no "fraidy cat" and would continue to mingle with crowds despite police reports that a professional killer is stalking him. He also ruled out wearing a bullet-proof vest.

The president rode in an open-top vehicle and shook hands with crowds when he visited southern Mindanao to campaign for the House Speaker, José de Venecia, the ruling party's candidate for the May presidential election. — Reuters, Manila.

Clinton caught in holy row

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton has been criticised by the head of the archdiocese of Philadelphia for receiving communion during a mass on his tour of Africa.

Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua said Mr Clinton probably had not realised he is barred from receiving the Holy Eucharist, which Roman Catholics believe is the actual body of Christ. Non-Catholics are allowed to receive communion only in exceptional circumstances. "I believe he did something unlawful, but I don't believe he did it intentionally," Cardinal Bevilacqua said of the mass in South Africa's Soweto township. — AP, Philadelphia.

Cairo holds messiah group

EGYPTIAN authorities have detained 29 suspected members of a cult which believes the country will be flooded in the first three days of April, an interior ministry statement said yesterday. It said the group believes that 48-year-old Baha' Eddin Ahmed — one of the arrested — is the messiah. The statement added that those being held were to be interrogated. It was not immediately clear what the charges were. — Reuters, Cairo.

Botswana gets new leader

BOTSWANA'S new president, Festus Mogae, used his inaugural speech yesterday to promote the country's "phenomenal development" but also warned against complacency after 18 stable years under his predecessor.

"We should not delude ourselves into thinking that this is a smooth slide to prosperity," Mr Mogae, aged 58, told a rally of supporters. Ketumile Masire, aged 73, resigned as president to let Mr Mogae run as an incumbent to improve the ruling party's chances in next year's elections. — AP, Gaborone.

Riding to the rescue

A WOMAN in a wheelchair who moved into the shade cast by the wall of a block of flats in New York to cool off became an unwitting hero when a toddler fell from a third-floor window into her lap.

Stroke victim Barbara Jones, aged 31, received a glancing blow to the head as Adonis Gomez fell on to her, and then rolled on to pavement. The boy, who had bounced out of the window while playing on a sofa, was in a critical condition. — AP, New York.

Tree tribute to beach lifestyle



A boy examines tree logs that have been painted to resemble Australian surf lifesavers and women wearing old-fashioned bathing suits at an exhibit at the Melbourne International Flower Show. PHOTOGRAPH: WILL BURGESS

Iraq joins in April Fool fun

IN IRAQ, it appears, they enjoy an April Fool's joke too. A newspaper owned by President Saddam Hussein's son Uday raised hopes yesterday on page one that UN sanctions were about to end only to dash them on page two. An article in the Babil newspaper quoted President Clinton as saying: "It is time for lifting the sanctions." But when the story turned to the inside page, it revealed that it was "only an April Fool's joke. It is the beginning of spring. Many happy returns." — AP, Baghdad.

"If academics come up with an idea and get enough heavyweights to back it, then it becomes real — that's what they've done with Crabtree."
Vivek Chaudhary observes.

G2 page 5

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Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* will appear on an Italian postage stamp to be released on Saturday to mark the quincentenary of the painting's completion on April 4 1498. Da Vinci painted the fresco, *Il Cenacolo*, in the refectory of the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan.

ETA bombs Basque politicians' homes

Adela Gooch in Madrid

A WOMAN was injured yesterday as the Basque separatist guerrilla group ETA intensified its campaign against soft targets in the Basque country, bombing the homes of local politicians from the governing conservative party.

Bombs exploded at the homes of four Popular Party councillors early yesterday. The first went off just after midnight in the doorway of town councillor Mari Carmen Iruretagoyena's house in Fuenerrabia, near the French border, injuring his sister.

It was followed by other explosions in the coastal resort of San Sebastián and the frontier town of Iruñ. The bombs were placed in ballways and entrances to apartment buildings.

The attacks follow a police

crackdown which led to the arrest last week of 11 members of a key ETA terrorist unit in the Basque country. It was a severe blow to the group, now thought to have been reduced to one active unit in the region.

But yesterday's bombings signalled that PP councillors and their families remained easy targets. The group has killed since last July. ETA justifies the campaign on the grounds that PP officials are the direct descendants of dictator General Franco, whose regime brutally repressed Basque nationalism.

The government, facing the impossible task of protecting Spain's 24,699 PP councillors, warned yesterday that security measures should be taken.

The campaign of violence has led to an outburst of public anger at ETA, which has been responsible for 766 deaths in the past 30 years.

UN arms embargo unlikely to halt latest Balkan crisis

The big powers that turned a blind eye to Kosovo once before must now find a way to halt Milosevic's aggression, writes Ian Traynor

MORE than 10 years after Slobodan Milosevic came to power in Serbia and set about redrawing the map of the Balkans in blood, the West is still labouring to come up with an effective and coherent policy towards a leader who has proved himself the most dangerous figure in post-cold war Europe.

The decision yesterday by the United Nations Security Council to reimpose the arms embargo on Yugoslavia that was lifted two years ago following the US-brokered Bosnia peace accord is a slap on the wrist. It will have little impact on the Kosovo crisis in the southern Balkans, where Mr Milosevic's well-armed henchmen are digging in for a fight with the increasingly radicalised and frustrated Albanian majority.

Kosovo is Yugoslavia's unfinished business. It was the card Mr Milosevic played first in the battle he lost to control as much as possible of old Yugoslavia. Caught up throughout the 1990s in the Croatian and Bosnian wars, the big powers preferred to turn a blind eye to the "Albanian question", and such neglect is now coming home to roost.

Western policy-makers and analysts at a recent conference on the Balkans were profoundly pessimistic and had little idea what to do about Mr Milosevic and Kosovo. A leading UN peacekeeping strategist said: "We haven't come up with any proposals to prevent a conflict in Kosovo."

Most agreed that a full-scale conflict there would dwarf even Bosnia in its grimness, its potential to draw in neighbouring countries and its capacity to sow tension between the international powers.

The Bosnian bloodbath triggered the worst crisis between the US and Europe since Nato's foundation, commented one west European ambassador. The rift over Kosovo could be worse still, he said.

A former Western ambassador to Yugoslavia believed that in the end Kosovo — Serbia's southern province bordering Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro — would be carved up between the Serbs and the Albanians. "In the long term it's hard to see how to keep Kosovo locked into Serbia."

And Kosovo's Albanians, the "last prisoners" of Yugoslavia, also want out. They have the fastest growing and youngest population in Europe: they outnumber local Serbs nine to one and the invaded six Albanians are born for every Serb born in rump Yugoslavia.

Although Kosovo is a poor region, it has been fought over for centuries. It was on the Kosovo plain outside Pristina in the 14th century that the Turks vanquished the

Serbs, destroying the Serbs' medieval empire and ushering in 500 years of Ottoman rule in the region.

"It's very important to grow a very strategic," said senior Nato military commander. "You just need to look at a map. It's no surprise that it was here the Turks fought the Serbs."

Mr Milosevic prizes Kosovo's zinc and lead mines and its hydro-electric resources. And the province is dotted with medieval Serbian cultural relics. For years, Belgrade has floated trial balloons on partitioning Kosovo. In any such scheme, Mr Milosevic would seek to take the mines and the monasteries and leave the Albanians the mountains.

It may not come to that, but Mr Milosevic's may be calculating on an escalation of the crisis, betting that international divisions and paralysis will allow him to act with impunity.

"There is no alternative to Milosevic and we need to work with him to bring stability to Serbia," said a west European official.

Mr Milosevic thrives on instability. In the past decade he has used tumult and violence to shore up his power. He rubbed out Kosovo's autonomy and established a police regime. He brought down the governments of Vojvodina and Montenegro using street mobs. He attempted a putsch in the old ruling Yugoslav communist party. He turned tanks on his own people in Belgrade. He invaded Slovenia, partitioned Croatia for a time, and sponsored wide-ranging atrocities in Bosnia.

"Belgrade realises we have prevented the worst," said a senior European diplomat more in hope than confidence. "The immediate risk is frozen."

United Nations Security Council members vote yesterday in favour of a resolution on an arms embargo against Yugoslavia to drive home the need for a peaceful solution to the Kosovo crisis. PHOTOGRAPH: MARTY LEDERHANDLER

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Diary

Matthew Norman

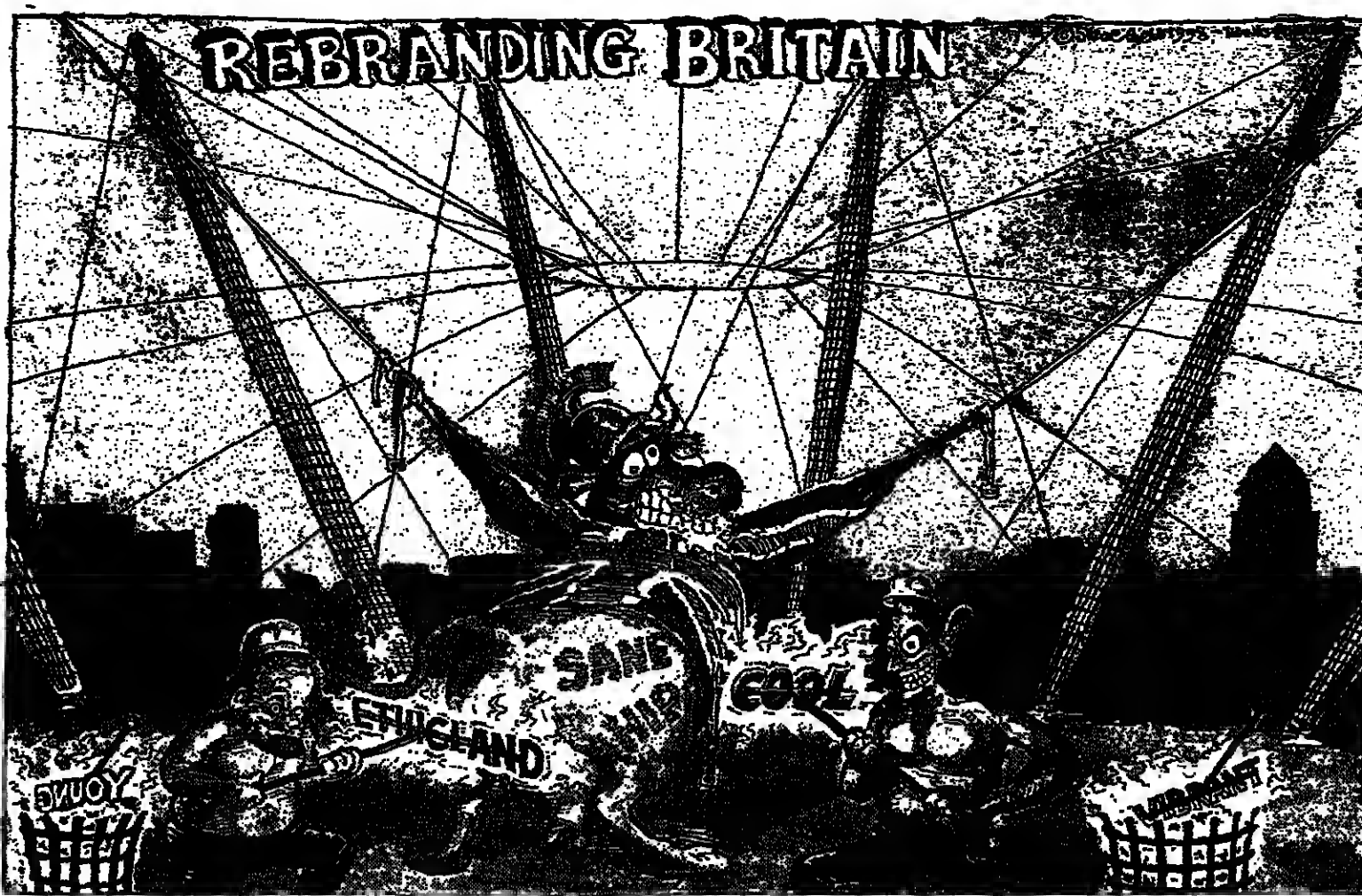
WE'll come through it, as we always do, but at the moment Paul Johnson and I are estranged. My sane and rational friend takes umbrage at the phrase "myriad howlers", used here of his splendid book, *A History of The American People*. Bless the old boy to tiny pieces, he does have a point. Myriad literally means beyond counting, and who would have the time or energy to count them all? No, let us be gracious, and celebrate the letter Paul reports having recently received (no doubt unsolicited) from the Institute for Accuracy in Academia, praising the scarcity of mistakes. A little light research reveals that the US organisation — and this truly will astonish you — is a rabidly rightwing, demagogically homophobic bunch of foaming paranoiacs. In the mid-80s, it recruited students to report instances of leftwing bias on campus, until it became such a laughing stock even with the American right — a US version, if you will, of the Monday Club — that it faded from public view. How good to know it's still going, and doing God's work.

BYELECTION approaches for the Mendip District Council, and the Liberal Democrats have chosen their candidate. He is Jim Mochmacz, a former phone engineer who claims that using a mobile made him ill. Only in January, Mr Mochmacz publicly described his symptoms, which range from severe headaches to complete loss of memory. We wish him well for a swift and full recovery, and would remind him that the election is on April 24.

STRIKE me pink, my old friend Peter Bottomley has a new career. Poor Bottomley is moonlighting under the sobriquet Cyclops, would you believe it, as political gossip columnist for the satirical magazine *The Insider*. Nothing Virginia's recent tribute in an interview — "he's very other-worldly, he hasn't a clue what's going on around him most of the time" — we turn expectantly to Cyclops, and find him jesting about Robin Cook's vanity and Mr Tony Blair's pattern baldness. Hats off (or on for Mr Blair). However, when we call to congratulate him, there is no response. Tut tut. Second rule of journalism, we must always, always answer our mobile. Still, early days. He'll learn.

AN impressive piece of junk mail reaches us, offering discounted subscription to *Personal Finance* and *Confidential* magazine. This astounding organ, says Paul O'Rourke, contains "the kind of knowledge you'd have to pay a specialist up to £1,000 an hour to get hold of" — secrets ranging from how to slow the ageing process to how to sell your holiday snaps for big money. Tremendous... and just £299 for the year. Anyone tempted should subscribe at once, and waste no time on the small print (particularly the bit which states: "At the end of the first year, my subscription will be renewed at £49 unless I inform you otherwise").

SERVING Officers tempted to complain about the Army and its practices are directed to General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley. "You eat the Queen's salt and you obey the Queen's regulations," he tells *Soldier* magazine. "It's no good suddenly saying, 'Oh, but my conscience tells me something else'. To hell with your bloody conscience — get out of the army." Well said, sir. Just one question. When you're dining in the mess, must you say "pass the Queen's salt"?



Goodbye, Rolls-Royce. Back in Blighty we won't miss you, will we?

Hugo Young



IN MANY branding of Britain, new or old, Rolls-Royce would naturally be a top marque. The emblematic British powerhouse, as recognised by educated foreigners all over the world, would contain within it a purring Rover, the acme of native engineering. Yet, in "Powerhouse-UK", the exhibition being staged on Horseguards Parade to impress Asian and European leaders arriving in London for ASEM II, as this week's summit is called, there's no Rolls-Royce to be seen. In fact, Rolls-Royce will very soon be no longer British.

The sale of Rolls, whether to Volkswagen or BMW, may not seem a dismal coincidence to every New Labour exponent of the cooling of Britannia, but it says something about the country. That Rolls should go German, while the best we have to show the Asians in our role as president of Europe is design and fashion, lifestyle and computer games, seems a desperate lunge for modernity at any cost. It's surely chastening that the British can't any longer invest in what they once did best, whereas BMW talks about doubling output of the great cars when it owns the business. It's certainly a come-down, is it not, to be offering as the identifying artefacts of British cool, to Zhu Rongji and his fellow summiters, inflatable plastic egg cups and Madonna's favourite shoe designer?

But the coincidence strikes me differently. What's impressive about the Rolls saga is not that the car rarely has a place in Britannia's sales-room but that its Germanification raises no murmur of disapproval. It may be mildly dismaying, but it's entirely acceptable. This great national totem, one of the few durably

excellent British products of the modern age, passes into the hands of the old enemy with barely a tabloid muttering. The realities of global economic life negate the thickest patriotic hide.

This is not a new phenomenon. The British have done some practice at commercial surrender. When BMW bought Rover in 1994, politics was being torn apart by incessant arguments in and out of the Major government concerning the finer points of European integration and the threat this posed to national identity. A collective nervous breakdown seemed imminent over the number of votes Britain should command at the EU table. Yet, in parallel with these unrequitable passions, dull sobriety was attending the transfer of a once-great British manufacturing industry into foreign control. Labour MPs attacked the Rover deal, out of routine oppositionism. From the Tory desperados, who had spent years deploring how Europe sucked the vital juices out of the British nation, nothing was heard.

SOME of the great utilities, meanwhile, have been colonised by French owners without dissent. The City of London is no longer, in the old sense, British either. Only one significant merchant bank remains under British control. All the great names at the heart of financial power belong now to Asians, Americans or mainland Europeans. If ownership is the test, there has been a massive change in the shape of the British economic inheritance. The national identity itself, if that is the measure, is altered beyond recognition, compared with what it was when Mrs Thatcher came to

power. Yet we heard nothing about identity on any of these occasions.

What happened, instead, was an unresisting accommodation with economic reality. Jobs and prosperity mattered to most people, including almost all politicians, more than the totemic worship of what was past. So it surely is with Rolls-Royce. If the route to survival and prosperity is through a shareholding that happens to be foreign, so be it. Britain has weaned itself from proprietorship as the only proof of meaningful existence. If not the coolest thing about Britannia, this certainly reveals a mature people: more mature than their leaders often give them credit for.

What replaces ownership, in the branding of Britain, is a debatable matter. On show at Powerhouse-UK is not only, in some cases, the thinnest of kitschy trivia, but language that strains to make a point. How to crystallise the British experience? A key proposition is that Britain "is a network of culture both at home and abroad". This "embraces connection, collaboration, generosity and trust", allowing "a more intelligent, imaginative and ultimately successful" way of doing business. Cities, further, are "a canvas for creativity as well as inspiration", while "living in Britain feeds into the creative experience, and Britain's creative culture influences lifestyles".

Perusing these Powerhouse legends, I felt dire intimations of the unrevealed millennial theology of the Dome. Linguistically, Horseguards is a dry run for Greenwich, and there's more work to be done. On the other hand, image counts more than ever in the modern age. For a tradition-soaked country, a re-inven-

tion of what the British would like to think about themselves serves its purpose. Where a nation is going matters as much as where it came from, especially when the nation in question has enjoyed the rapid approval of the world for the priority it always so lovingly gave the past over the future.

That people understand this, perhaps better than some of their leaders, is shown by their acquiescence in the surrender of Rolls-Royce. They do not see the national identity being in any way imperilled by the sale of the emblem. Emblems, it seems, are not what they were. There may be strong economic reasons for regretting the decline of British manufacturing industry, but that's different from saying that Britain has been cut to its inalienable heart by the transfer from one national owner-manager to another. On the contrary, it's through such a transfer that the marque will be revitalised, and the economy with it. The Britishness of Britain remains, however some of her most famous names are now controlled.

This story has relevance on a wider canvas. If the ownership of assets no longer defines the national identity, what price political responsibility? Having witnessed with equanimity what happens in the economic world, for how long do we continue to persuade ourselves that, if European integration goes another inch further, Britain will cease to be the Britain we know and love? The essence of Britain may not lie in Powerhouse-UK, but it no longer needs to be protected by national separatism either. One day, we will learn. Britain without the pound will be no less Britain than Britain without the Rover.

Hattie's handouts

Roy Hattersley



AS A RESULT of a blind loyalty which readers have come to expect, I have refrained until now from offering the slightest criticism of Alastair Campbell's conduct and character. But this week the behaviour of the Prime Minister's press secretary has been so bizarre that I can remain silent no longer. His failure to suppress Harriet Harman's Tuesday Guardian article was a grotesque dereliction of duty.

Perhaps it was his obsession with trivia — like the Prime Minister's new role as European sales representative for Mr Rupert Murdoch — which deflected him from his important tasks. But he had only to read Ms Harman's first paragraph to realise what damage the publication of her thoughts would do. It referred to social security payments as "handouts". That term could not possibly have been sanctioned by Number 10. Handouts are what toffs give to bums on skid row. When the Secretary of State for Social Security uses such language, she illustrates more than that a private education does not guarantee an adequate vocabulary. She reveals an attitude towards the poor which even a mildly radical government should not tolerate.

Anyone who thinks of income support as a handout regards the welfare state as charity — and not in the Pauline sense of that word but in its meaning as understood by the Poor Law Commission. Handouts are undeserved and would be unnecessary if only scroungers would pull themselves together and do a decent day's work. Handouts are the middle class's munificence to the poor.

WE HAVE known for years that Samuel Smiles — a good man in his way — has replaced Keir Hardie as the inspiration of the Labour Party. But it is still a shock, when from time to time, the worst aspects of his philosophy bubble to the surface of Government policy. Increasingly, the unemployed are held personally responsible for their unhappy condition. Welfare to work is certainly the social transition that must lie at the heart of Labour reforms. Harriet Harman (or Gordon Brown?) is undoubtedly right to remove the barriers to employment and provide employers with extra incentives to take on extra labour. But too often the new policies have an ugly undertone of resentment — an audible if unspoken question: How dare the certainly feeble and probably corrupt welfare recipients live on £30

a week at the expense of prosperous Britain? Increasingly, the poor are being blamed for their poverty.

I admit that it is the product of my tribal upbringing that I persist in the belief that the way to get Britain back to work is to recognise society. Nothing that I saw during my 30 years as member of parliament for an inner-city constituency, changed my view that the problem lay with measures not men. Certainly some youths — the third generation unemployed — regard work as being beyond their aspiration. I am prepared to change their view of life by the coercion of workfare — once the jobs are available. But their fathers — and, what ever Ms Harman may believe, their mothers too — remain desperate for jobs. For years, the problem has been the same. The government failed to provide.

The notion of welfare scroungers is, I know, well established in the Home Counties and the southern suburbs. That is hardly surprising when even the Labour Party — which once spoke for the poor — gives it credence. In the very first paragraph of her Guardian article, the Secretary of State for Social Security announces that the voters have rejected higher taxes to finance the welfare review. Perhaps that was a misprint which Mr Campbell, had he done his duty, would have spotted. It is the voters but the Labour leadership which has refused to contemplate raising income tax. The "thumbs down" to which Ms Harman so elegantly refers, was given by the Prime Minister. On the evidence, the people are much more progressive on the issue than Tony Blair.

But the real indictment of the Harman position is revealed by her reaction to the (almost certainly mis-

The unemployed are held personally responsible for their unhappy condition

taken) belief that the middle class is opposed to tax increases. The idea that politicians might lead rather than follow public opinion has apparently never entered her head. The focus groups have indicated that the people who benefited most from the inequality of the Thatcher years want to retain their privileged position. The Secretary of State for Social Security does not even contemplate telling them that their selfishness is wrong.

Why, I wonder, are these people in politics at all when they could go out into the streets with a Mori or Gallup questionnaire and discover directly which policies receive a superficial endorsement. The Harman approach not only denies the just deserts of the poor, it diminishes politics. If we had an active press secretary in Downing Street, he would have prevented the expression of such dangerous views.

Elderly account-holders taken for a ride

Bank robbery

Andrew Phillips

THIS week saw the revelation of a Lloyds TSB memo discouraging staff from helping bank customers get a decent return on their money. It is not the first attempt by a major bank to make a killing by exploiting the loyalty and financial naivety of its own customers, and MPs are beginning to act.

On the Radio 2 Jimmy Young Show, where I give legal advice, I heard from Mrs Christine Mann from Bolton. Her parents are both over 90 (her father is a retired bus driver). She found they had over £24,000 of life savings languishing in a deposit account (so named) with the Ponton branch of the Midland Bank, earning just 0.8 per cent a year. They had put their money

into the "deposit account" over 30 years ago when it was in the mainstream of bank "products" and earned a fair rate of interest. Like many trusting folk, they could not conceive that "their" bank would actively do them down, and kept the account going in the belief that it would go on earning a fair rate of return.

In the 1980s the marketers in some banks and building societies realised that by heavily promoting new "products" on new (though often scarcely changed) terms, with glib names, they could attract new business. They also discovered that many customers were confused by all this under cover of the confusion, they could then get away with radically worsening the interest on the "old" accounts without vulnerable customers realising. By keeping some differ-

ence, however insignificant, in the other terms attaching to the "old" accounts these banks latched on to the principle of "customer choice" to justify their depredations.

By the end of 1990 Midland were paying the Radfords, Christine Mann's parents, 4.5 per cent on their "old style" deposit accounts against a base rate of 14 per cent.

BY THE end of 1993 they paid a princely 0.5 per cent against a base rate 9 times higher. Meanwhile, the new savings account, while not particularly sparkling, earned between 50 per cent and 300 per cent more in interest terms than the deposit account (still so called).

Keith Whitson, the bank's chief executive, advanced four defences to me. He says the Radfords were given

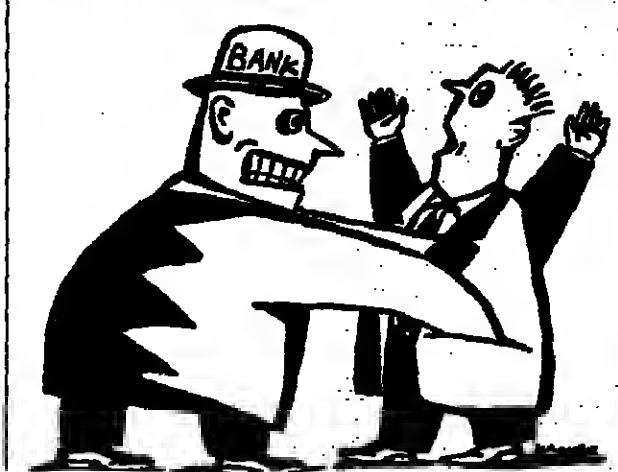
notice of interest-rate drops by the details being posted in the national press; the bank has sent a general leaflet to their depositors every year since 1994; they are not in any event under any duty to provide investment advice (while simultaneously claiming it had been suggested orally to the old man that he transferred to a higher-interest account); and finally (wait for it), "it would be inappropriate to arbitrarily change arrangements customers have made without their agreement."

The fact, of course, is that the bank did just that. If "arbitrarily changed arrangements this customer had made without his agreement", and in the most fundamental of ways. What is more, Mr Whitson at length accepted that (to use his words) "clearly there is little benefit to continuing to

hold a deposit account if better returns are required" — as if anyone doesn't want better returns! That admission also reveals his final defence — the sanctity of customer choice — for the sham it is in such cases.

Would he describe it as a "choice" if it were his parents' money?

The banks use every hard-discount to woo customers. "Trust us," they say, "We will look after your money." Yet some are prepared to



prey on them to make a killing for their shareholders (and, as the Lloyds memo indicates, to increase bonuses of staff and directors).

The Tory MP David Davis, chairman of the public accounts committee, has contacted the Radfords. He is planning to table a finance bill amendment to outlaw this scam. Meanwhile, mainly because of the David and Goliath problem of potential legal bills, there is no modern case in which the judges have had the chance to redefine the obligations of banks to retail customers. It would be a public service if the Radfords could be helped to put the Midland Bank to the test.

Andrew Phillips, partner at solicitors Bates, Wells & Braithwaite, is a member of the Scott Trust which owns the Guardian

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New perils in Israel

It only needs a spark

WHOEVER killed the Second Engineer matters much less than the likely consequences. These could be as severe as those which have almost destroyed the Middle East peace process since Israeli agents killed the No. 1 of the Hamas terrorist organisation two years ago. There is a difference between the killings. Yesterday prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu was quick to deny that Israeli intelligence had anything to do with the death of Munt al-Din Sharif, shot dead on the West Bank on Sunday. He may even be telling the truth. In January 1996, Israeli sources were only too happy to nudge and wink after "the Engineer" Yahya Ayash was blown up in Gaza, in a killing which led to a wave of retaliatory suicide attacks — and to the electoral victory of the Likud party and Mr Netanyahu himself. But in the situation today, where a single spark may start a fire, a denial has little relevance.

Even without this killing, the latest US initiative is already in a desperate state of dither. The administration cannot decide whether to continue playing along with Mr Netanyahu's strategy of minimal concessions which can be claimed to keep the peace process "alive" — yesterday Madeleine Albright was trying to make the best of a qualified offer of a further "third pullback" in eventual "final stage" negotiations. The Israeli acceptance, 20 years late, of UN Resolution 425 on withdrawal from Lebanon — but only subject to "security arrangements" — is a more transparent

diversion. Or should Bill Clinton go public with a plan which would shift the burden of decision back onto the Israelis? Such a plan — the now famous "13 per cent pullback" of Israeli forces from the West Bank — does not appear to have been formally delivered by the US envoy Dennis Ross. Nor does Mr Netanyahu's supposed counter-offer (which he too has formally denied) of 11 per cent. Yasser Arafat seems inclined to accept the US proposal though it falls far short of Palestinian demands.

This is all shadow boxing: no one really supposes that two per cent is the difference between peace and a breakdown. The argument is not even primarily about the conditions attached to any offer: there is little real difference between Israel's insistence on Palestinian "reciprocity" and the US formula of "parallel actions" to which Mr Arafat would have to sign up. The issue is rather which side is more willing to risk a total breakdown of the peace process. Mr Arafat from his weaker position continues to make the greater concessions: Mr Netanyahu pleads weakness in the shape of domestic hawks, but plays from what he perceives as strength.

Whose interests are served by the inflammatory death of Hamas's No. 2? The suggestion that the PA might have arranged his death, to demonstrate its commitment to Israeli "security" defies commonsense. No one knows better than Mr Arafat that in a real explosion his Palestinian authority would be the first victim, and he has devoted a lot of effort recently to seeking to "Palestinise" Hamas. For any Israeli leader to countenance an action which could trigger a return to terrorist bombings also seems an act of huge folly. Yet the deed has been done, and it can only have been committed with the intent of wrecking what remains of the peace process.

Whether from motives of despair or destruction, such forces exist on both sides. The signal which this sends should be felt everywhere and particularly in Washington. Mr Clinton is said to be unconvinced that an open clash with Mr Netanyahu is good tactics — but since when did a compromise plan amount to confrontation? Next month's visit to Israel by Tony Blair should become part of a concerted effort. If quiet diplomacy will not break the deadlock, a louder version must be tried.

Irvine's law

Accounting for reform

LORD Irvine was unequivocal. The civil and criminal justice systems were under serious strain, access to legal services in crisis. The courts needed modernising and the judiciary made more representative (more women, more members of ethnic minorities, younger judges). There was growing dissatisfaction with outdated, secretive and elitist arrangements for appointing judges. But Labour had a plan to deal with these crises: both a ministry of justice and an independent judicial appointments commission. Alas, all that is wrong was that these words were written for the Guardian by the Lord Chancellor six years ago. Labour, which only adopted these long-advocated reforms in the 1990s, abandoned the creation of a ministry of justice before the election and dropped the independent judicial appointments system after it. Lord Irvine decreed late last year that he had decided "not to proceed with further work" on the appointments commission. Enter Austin Mitchell, Labour MP.

Mr Mitchell's 10 minute rule bill will not change the system but does remind Labour

of its earlier thirst for reform. The MP is right to describe Lord Irvine's office as "a medieval relic". It was Mr Mitchell who started the first round of legal reform a decade ago with a private member's bill that ultimately resulted in solicitors losing their monopoly over conveyancing and barristers their rights of audience monopoly in the courts. But the Chancellor's Department remains untouched and so does the 300-year-old Home Office. Both major parties have made the same error of leaving law administration reform to its legal members. Most resist change to the cosy system once inside. No one suggests doctors must always be in charge of the health system. The same principle should apply to law. Lord Hailsham, with 2,500 judicial appointments under his control, smugly declared the system was "almost as foolproof as it could be made".

Minor reforms have been made: judicial vacancies are now advertised; a few antiquated restrictive practices modified. But order and justice still need separating. The Home Office should stick to order (police, prison, and probation) and the Lord Chancellor's office to justice (law reform, legal aid, court administration). But both need to be in the Commons, directly accountable to MPs. Lord Irvine could still have his wool-sack but not, as a junior minister, his cabinet seat.

Teflon zone

But it may just work

ANYONE doubting the Government's determination to change Britain's image in the world may have to eat their words by the end of this week. Yesterday Robin Cook named 33 people for Panel 2000 — from

Stella McCartney to the ubiquitous Peter Mandelson. Their job is to project "the truth and reality" about modern Britain abroad. At the same time (through what appears to be unintended piece of serendipity) yesterday was also chosen as the day to launch *powerhouse.uk*. This is a celebration of British creative talent housed in four inflated silver drums (not to be mistaken for domes) at Horse Guards Parade in Whitehall. Neither of these events should be confused with what is happening today when Tony Blair will announce the names of the first 300 so-called Millennium Products. This coincides with the installation of the Millennium Dome's Teflon-coated roof, the biggest in the world.

It is easy to be cynical about the Government's attempt to rebrand Britain. Of course there is a strong element of hype in it. Of course there is a political dimension. Of course it may be part of a distorted vision to navigate a post-industrial Britain, buffeted by the strong pound, into new creative pastures. It may be a bit of all of these things, but it is also emerging as a coordinated exercise being pursued with deadly seriousness. And it may just work. There is no reason why the marketing techniques successfully applied by companies shouldn't work also for countries. If they don't there is little lost and if they do, much to gain.

There are even signs that the initially sceptical attitude of so many citizens towards the Dome is mellowing as it rises out of the Greenwich wasteland — three weeks ahead of schedule as it happens — and is seen to be generating lots of new ideas. This won't stop people knocking the project and all associated with it. But if the Government can succeed in making cynicism pay then it may yield unexpected dividends.

Letters to the Editor

On redress, Guardian-style

ME AND my friend Jan like to think of ourselves as typical Guardian women — good haircuts, studious spectacles, formidable intelligence — so we are well used to finding nothing on your Style page for us to wear. But at last you have cracked it (April 1). Loose floppy trousers ending just below the knee, argyle ankle socks and high heels would be wonderful for us to cling on before tripping off for another shift at the hospital, or clearing up after the kids. Thanks Guardian, although, having seen the date, perhaps you were not serious? Pauline Rags, Essex.

TWICE recently I have written to you, using a first class stamp, only to see the correspondence on the relevant article published the next day, ie the day before mine could have appeared. Should I get a modem or a fax machine, or should I give up writing to you? Markie Pawson, Street, Somerset.

SOME days it seems the only way to get a letter published in the Guardian is to be a celebrity, an MP or the representative of an organisation. Dr John Davies, National Organisation for Correspondence Rights for All People, Kirby-in-Cleveland, N Yorks.

BRILLIANT. Hiding the April Fool piece on the Letters page placing a judicious named organisation "the Institute for Accuracy in Academia" next to the silly claim "whose staff have been through every word of my book" is genius. But won't Paul Johnson be miffed when he reads it? Anthony Purcell, Chelmsford, Essex.

In search of democracy

HUGO Young (Political payments) No problem — provided we know who's paying, March 31) is naive in thinking business funding of political parties does not matter. We will never know who is buying influence. The political system is rapidly degenerating to a state where only those with huge funds can afford to take part. Politicians increasingly only act in the interests of the rich and the result is an exclusive system in which democracy is replaced by plutocracy.

In the US, less than half the electorate votes in presidential elections and only a third in congressional elections. For most ordinary people it is simply not worth bothering to vote. New Labour was elected to revive a sleaze-ridden democratic system. It is doing nothing of the sort. Trevor Fisher, Stafford.

HOW can Harriet Harman be so certain as to which precise policies voters "overwhelmingly supported" or "resoundingly rejected"? (We will redistribute, March 31) Elections are a blunt instrument used to decide which party shall form the government. The claim that every

one of its policies has been fully endorsed is spurious. Putting a cross on a ballot paper may be determined by the simplest of reasoning ("I have always voted this way") or by a complex of policy, personality and persuasion. The Tories were not resoundingly rejected in 1997 and while Labour policies were overwhelmingly supported is a matter of conjecture. Dennis Johnson, Bedford.

VOTERS who voted for measures to tackle poverty and social exclusion did not at the same time "vote against high tax hand-outs for the poor" just because Labour politicians have given up on fair taxation, please don't assume that voters have. Jeremy Marsh, London.

I AM relieved I am not the only person in the UK who finds the idea of an elected mayor an anathema in principle. A quick look at France, Australia and the US will verify Robert Clarke's assertion (Letters, March 27) about the opportunities for more corruption. There is an even greater, if subtler, danger from a time-

limited "supremo" trying to leave his or her mark, each leaving an expensive icon behind. A further question is the cost. How many staff and specialist advisers will be needed? Who will service the assembly? Londoners are being forced to swallow greater centralisation rather than being allowed to help with their own government. Paul Harrington, London.

THOUGH London Docklands Development Corporation is finally no more, many will still use it to justify the Thatcher experiment. But without the existence of the "Thames Barrier", the Docklands project would have been unthinkable. I wonder whether the free-market fundamentalists can appreciate the irony of the great memorial to Thatcher being made possible by a democratic body and a political system she despised and ultimately destroyed. Rob Kenyon, London.

COULD there be any truth in the rumour that Tony Blair's candidate for Mayor of London is Rupert Murdoch? T Was, London.



Here's an idea to kick around

SPORT seems to have lost its grace and goodwill: violence attends football matches. Could it be that, in this game the most animal-like part of man, the lower limbs, are dominant? In handball, netball, cricket, rugby, hockey or tennis, a more advanced activity takes place and the spectators are not roused to violence. A football is a

sphere, similar in size to a human head. Dances used the skull of an enemy as a football. Our earth itself is a sphere, and it was a sacred symbol. Kicking a sphere may cause contempt of this symbol. We need sport and games, but it may be wise to sponsor football less. Sibylla Alexander, Galashiels.

Birth date

F N SPENCER says she had her baby on the NHS on February 17, 1948 (Letters, March 24). My son was born in Broadgreen hospital, Liverpool on January 1, 1948 in similar conditions. However, we paid the hospital £4.10 shillings for the two-week stay. This was the contribution from my National Insurance stamp and that of my husband's, who had returned from the war in 1947 and was working. I still have the receipt. F M Radcliff, Preston.

Gland to be gay

YOUR article about the prostate gland (Search for the prostate, March 31) was billed as "everything you need to know". It was, in fact, a classic example of prostatesphobia. Full of negative stereotypes, it discussed all the troubles associated with this part of the male anatomy without once mentioning the delights. As a sex gland, the prostate rivals the clitoris. During anal intercourse, stimulation can induce a sensational orgasm. It is time the medical profession abandoned its homophobic prejudices and started telling the full story about one of the hidden wonders of the male body. Peter Patchell, London.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. We may edit letters. The Country Diary is on page 10.

Tube beats the train when it comes to noise on the line

FOR A really noisy journey, Jonathan Cockburn (Letters, April 1) should forget the world of train-based mobile phone users, where you just can't rely on the frequency of the interruption, and head for the Circle Line when he is near at Paddington. Here he will be regaled by a loud synthesised voice spewing out an unrelenting stream of out-of-information. Sample: "The next station will be Great Portland Street"; followed five seconds later by: "This is Great Portland Street". That's right — the tube didn't suddenly veer off.

last 100 years, anyone managing to travel by tube is nothing short of remarkable. Matthew Carse, London.

UNDERSTAND Jonathan Cockburn's irritation, but he needs to be a little more tolerant. For some people, a train journey presents a good opportunity to return calls and do a little business. Far from going away, mobile phones are set to become ubiquitous — our grandchildren will be astonished that once, if you wanted to speak to someone, you had to telephone a building in the hope that they were in.

As communications develop, mobile phones will increasingly be used for faxes and e-mail, but appropriate practices and standards of etiquette will emerge, just as they have done for letter-writing and for conventional telephoning. Gerald Haigh, Bedford.

It's amazing how well it works. Baffled overseas tourists no longer clutter every station looking puzzled, but head straight to their destination, having instantly learned English. Nervous commuters, having endured years of uncertainty, can relax as they are reassured every few moments that they haven't got on the wrong train, or got off at the wrong stop. How, over the

Remember today's front page headline

Frustrating isn't it? Trying to remember something you read only a short while ago. Yet people with Alzheimer's might forget that they have children. Or that they're married to someone. Just imagine being that someone. Having to live with your loved one not even knowing who you are. Watching them become a different person.

Will you remember those who can't?

There are 670,000 people in Britain with some form of dementia. And many more family members are touched by it. The Alzheimer's Disease Society is here to give them the support they desperately need. But we need your help to keep doing that. Please give £20 today by filling in the form below. You could give four people information and support through our Helpline. Please don't forget about them.

I'll remember those who can't

Here is my gift of ☐ £20 ☐ £40 ☐ £80
Or my choice of £

Name Mr/Ms/Ms/Ds
Address
Postcode

I enclose a cheque made payable to Alzheimer's Disease Society
OR debit my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ CAF Charity Card

Card no.

Exp. date Signature

Please send this form with your gift to:
Alzheimer's Disease Society
FREEPOST SW8543
London SW1P 177
Reg Charity No 26047

Alzheimer's Disease Society
Giving help to those who can't remember

Or call the donation line on 0171 506 0825

Goodbye cruel world

David McKie

ACCORDING to the Mail on Sunday, a company in Ohio has invented a talking tombstone. For £200 or more, an outfit which calls itself Viewlog will build into the headstone above your grave a video unit on which can be recorded the tributes of your sorrowing friends, or even an account of your life as recorded by yourself. These electronic biographies will run

to 250 pages of text and photographs. "We've developed a memorial that tells a story," the firm's founder is quoted as saying. "People can easily spend £10,000 when a person dies, and what do they get for that? A piece of granite with a name on it."

Where better to reflect on this thrilling technological breakthrough than among the bits of granite with names on them in Stoke Poges churchyard, where Gray wrote his Elegy, one of the best loved poems in the language:

*The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way
And leaves the world to me...*

Not any more he doesn't. The lea is now a well-tended field which belongs to the National Trust, with an unmanicured, rambling monument to the poet (by Wyatt,

1799) in one corner. As for the frail memorials with uncut rhymes, imploring the passing tributes of a sigh, which so affected Gray in the 1790s, most of the words inscribed on such as remain are now beyond decipherment.

Even so, it's a tranquil spot on which to reflect on death and the art of the epitaph. Some inscriptions purport to address the passer-by on the dead person's behalf, sometimes a little brutally:

*Remember man as thou pass by,
As thou art now, so once was I,
As I am now, so must thou be,
Remember Death and follow me.*

I first saw this one, I think, in the churchyard in Adelcum-Eccup, Yorkshire, but there are many variants. Others simply solicit a moment of thought. Inside the church at Stoke Poges there's a 18th-century tomb with an

inscription in Norman French which, translated, says:

*All those who pass by here
Pray for the soul of this one
William of Wyntermerse he
had for name
God to him grant true
pardon*

So be it.

More often, though, the words inscribed are eulogies from the mourners. The most poignant of these at Stoke Poges was written by Gray himself for the grave of his aunt, Mary Ambrose, and his mother, Dorothy Gray (died March 11, 1753, aged 67) of whom he says: "The careful tender Mother of many children, one of whom alone had the misfortune to survive her." (Eighteen years later, Gray was interred in the same grave, though his name does not appear on it).

It may be true, as the poet says in his Elegy, that even the paths of glory lead but to the grave, yet it's clear in Stoke Poges churchyard that

distinctions of class and sex persist beyond the funeral. Everywhere wealthy men are commemorated in terms of their feats of arms, or diplomacy, or business, or scholarship, while their wives are remembered as faithful help-meets and the poor are barely remembered at all. Two gravestones at Stoke Poges salute the lives of good and faithful servants; not as servants of God, but as servants of the Vyse family, who lived in the biggest house in the neighbourhood.

Yet it's often the simplest tombstones which tell the most powerful stories. I saw one last summer in the graveyard beside the cathedral ruins at St Andrew's in Scotland, erected by David Rodger, candlemaker of St Andrew's, it records the successive deaths of his children, Jean (January 1814, three years), Janet (one month later, two years), William (December 1815, 15 months), and Catharine (October 1817, four

months), followed in August 1819 by the death of his wife, also Catharine, aged 40. No storied urn or animated bust could tell that story more poignantly.

And indeed, in Stoke Poges churchyard, one begins to fear the effect as a few years from now casual visitors trigger the video units out of curiosity to see what they may contain. Here, some mute, inglorious Milton, condemned to muteness no more, will be railing away against cultural standards which left his work unpublished while lavishing public attention on the work of Fiona Pitt-Rivers. There, some village Hampden will be giving a posthumous blow-by-blow account of his ceaseless struggles with the bloated and bungling bureaucrats of Buckinghamshire County Council, or Brussels. No let Viewlog ply its ingenious trade in Ohio, and leave the world of the country churchyard in Britain to darkness, and to me.

Bella Abzug

Loud and clear against oppression

WHILE the politicians who hated the former New York Democrat Congresswoman — and there were many — will eulogise her lavishly, those of us who learned politics from her, who loved voting for her (as opposed to voting for the lesser of two evils), who cheered as she put a radical's agenda into mainstream politics, feel enormously sad at her loss and considerable anger at her social invisibility these last several years.

Bella, who has died aged 77, following complications from heart surgery, was never silent in the face of oppression or adversity, but the cameras and microphones were pointed in another direction — any other direction. She was the politician who fought for those of us not rich enough to buy one of their own: the feminist who not only said what she meant but said it loudly and in every forum. She was a pioneer in making women's

and gay rights issues of social policy and governance. Her death marks the beginning of the end of a generation of feminist heroes.

Bella was born just after the first world war to Esther and Emanuel Savitsky, themselves part of an immigrant generation of Russian Jews who changed the social face of New York City, most especially in the way they valued education and sent their working-class children to colleges. Bella's father was a butcher who ran the "Live and Let Live Meat Market" in Manhattan.

Bella went to Bronx public schools; then to Hunter College, a non-elite school for women where she was president of the student council; then to the prestigious Columbia University Law School in Manhattan, where she got her degree in law. Her mother, who rarely figures in accounts of Bella's life, was responsible for her going to Columbia. She told me, said Bella, "that I had to stay near home, so I went to Columbia."

Admitted to the New York bar in 1947, Bella practised law in New York City from 1944-1970. In 1970 she was elected to the House of Representatives. Her unforgettable slogan was "A Woman's Place is in the House." At the time, this was bold and brazen.

Bella's legal career was solidly left and equality-driven. She was a labour lawyer who represented auto workers, restaurant workers and longshoremen. In the 1950s she was a civil rights lawyer trying to end the apartheid that existed in the southern states of America. Most famously, she was chief counsel in an appeal for Willie McGee, a black man convicted of raping a white woman and sentenced to death in Mississippi. Pregnant and in that state to argue the case, she was attacked by the Ku Klux Klan; she hid in a bathroom. The Supreme Court tried to intervene twice to stay the execution, but in 1951 McGee was put to death. In the 1960s Bella was also active in defending leftists and others



She began wearing big hats when she was a young lawyer, so that male colleagues would stop asking her to get coffee for them

against the activities of the red-baiting Senator Joseph McCarthy.

In 1969, in response to the American government's resumption of nuclear testing, she was a founder of Women's Strike for Peace. Later she fought relentlessly against the Vietnam war, on her first day in Congress in 1971 she introduced a resolution that called for the withdrawal of troops

from Indochina. That's why we loved her just that. When she was invited to the White House by then President Nixon, she accepted, but wrote in her journal: "Who wants to listen to his pious idiocies?" When she met the president she told him her constituents demanded a US withdrawal from the war.

He wasn't the only president she confronted. She was co-

chair of Jimmy Carter's National Advisory Committee on Women, but argued with him over economic policy and was sacked. In 1975 she introduced the first lesbian-gay civil-rights bill. She was a founder of the National Women's Political Caucus, a group that tried to elect both Democrat and Republican women who were pro-woman, pro-equality. In 1977, she brought together women from all walks of life and all 50 states for the first — and only — National Women's Conference, in Houston, Texas, where an agenda for women's rights was developed. Gay rights and an end to racism were part of that agenda; so was relief from poverty, unwanted pregnancy, and discrimination in the workplace. For someone accused — by Norman Mailer no less — of having a voice that "could boil the fat off a tactical driver's neck", she sure could connect with women. In 1993, by then in a wheelchair, she led a conference of non-governmental

organisations that was held parallel to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. She had by no means lost her touch. Former President George Bush, on a private visit to China at the time, told a meeting of food production executives: "I feel somewhat sorry for the Chinese having Bella Abzug running around. Bella Abzug is the one who has always represented the extremes of the women's movement."

Bella, hearing of the remark, replied: "He was addressing a fertility group? That's appropriate." Back in 1972, in her book *Bella!* she wrote: "I've been described as a tough and noisy woman, a prizefighter, Mother Courage and a Jewish mother with more complaints than Portnoy. There are those who say I'm impatient, impetuous, uppity, rude, profane, harsh and overbearing... but whatever I am I am a very serious woman." She never stopped, never gave up.

Her own party did her dirty

by gerrymandering her district, by running male battles against her in primaries, by that exit from the House in 1977 was a final exit. She had given up her House seat to run for the Senate in 1978. She lost in the primary to the still-office Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

Martin Abzug, Bella's beloved husband of 44 years who she met aged 22 on a bus in Miami, died in 1986. She was broken-hearted. "I haven't been the same since," she said in an interview nine years after his death.

Obituaries will say that Bella was famous for her big hats, which she began wearing as a young lawyer so that male colleagues would stop asking her to get coffee for them. But she's famous precisely because hers was louder than theirs, hats notwithstanding.

Andrea Dworkin

Bella Abzug, politician, born July 24, 1920; died March 31, 1998



Rescue mission... Kenneth Monkman and Shandy Hall, the farmhouse immortalised in the novels of Laurence Sterne (below)



Kenneth Monkman

Recreating the world of Tristram Shandy

KENNETH Monkman, who has died aged 86, began an improbable crusade 35 years ago to rescue the creaky Yorkshire farmhouse made unforgettable by the wildly imaginative novels of Laurence Sterne like *Tristram Shandy*. Lighting upon Shandy Hall in Coxwold, at the foot of the Howardian Hills, in 1963, he realised that the tilting floors, overgrown garden and teetering chimney had survived with little change since Sterne's incumbency as the local vicar in the 1760s.

Helped enthusiastically by his wife, Julia, and a growing army of Sterne devotees as word got around, Monkman oversaw the gradual and comprehensive rescue of the medieval building. Encouraged by chance finds, including Sterne's cow-creeper and an ancient wall-painting underneath Georgian panelling, they recreated Shandy's cosy, but curious, world.

The spirit of the place — whose name derived from a local dialect word for "crooked" — was enhanced by the Monkman's decision to live in the hall from 1970, when much of the essential repair work was finished (although another two years of plastering and plumbing lay ahead). From Sterne's (and the fictional Tristram's) living and dining rooms, the Monkman's dispensed hospitality and learning. In the process making their home the destination of sentimental journeys for Sterne enthusiasts worldwide.

Furnishings came too, including the celebrated bust of the writer by Nollekens, which had been preserved by the owners of a neighbouring manor house. And the hall also conveniently housed the impressive library of Sterne papers and other material, which Monkman had built up as a young

and overwhelmingly keen disciple.

Something about the brilliant, idiosyncratic novelist's cast of mind has always inspired a particular fervour in his admirers, and Monkman flung himself into Sterne studies after discovering *Tristram Shandy* as a young journalist. After unsuccessful chemistry studies at Leeds University, he joined the Yorkshire Evening News as a trainee reporter, fell into Bohemian circles and was instantly smitten with *Tristram Shandy*, which — then as now — was something of a cult.

For all its dour and industrial reputation, Leeds in the 1930s retained the raffish and cosmopolitan side made famous at the turn of the century by the illustrator Phil May. Monkman made friends — such as artist Francis Butterfield, writer J.B. Priestley and sculptor Henry Moore — who were to prove invaluable

allies when the task of restoring Shandy Hall began.

His love of Sterne's eccentricities and free-thinking may have been rooted in a stern, nonconformist upbringing with a Methodist father, whose work as a banking inspector also demanded rigorous standards. Monkman was born in Carlisle, but a family move took him to Harrogate and boarding school to north Wales, before journalism in Leeds and — with the BBC as a script-writer on *Radio News* — in London.

His knowledge of the capital proved invaluable when the greatest filip to the rescue of Shandy Hall, and the revival of Sterne's reputation, followed a twist of fate which the writer would have enjoyed. The Church Commissioners deconsecrated the Archway Fields graveyard in Baywater, where Sterne had been buried, and a much-reluctant

bone-hunt ended in the reinterment of his remains at Coxwold.

Monkman went to the legendary lengths of measuring a skull found at Archway Fields, whose unusual length and narrowness matched descriptions of Sterne's head, and comparing it with the recently-rescued Nollekens bust. He was photographed by the writer's tombstone at its new resting place.

The Monkman's skill at enticing friends extended, crucially, to persuading official bodies — notably the North Riding of Yorkshire council and the then Ministry of Works — to match financial support of the restoration from the Pilgrim Trust. As well as repairing Shandy Hall, they created an other lasting memorial in the Laurence Sterne Trust, uniting Sterne scholars and creating a link between them in the lively magazine, the *Shandean*.

Contributors, debaters and others more on the periphery of Sterne enthusiasm were — and are — always made welcome at Shandy Hall, with guest rooms available and sound links with the pubs along Coxwold's picturesque main street.

York University, which awarded Monkman an honorary degree in 1990, extended the network by establishing a Centre for 18th Century Studies to work in partnership with the trust. Monkman is survived by his wife Julia, joint curator of Shandy Hall and largely responsible for its finely-restored gardens, and their three sons. He was buried at the foot of Sterne's grave at Coxwold St Michael's church.

Martin Wainwright

Kenneth Monkman, literary historian and restorer, born April 17, 1911; died March 22, 1998

E M Sankara Namboodiripad

Paradoxes of an Indian democrat

THE ELECTION of E M Sankara Namboodiripad, who has died aged 88, as chief minister of Kerala in 1967 created a sensation. For his elevation made him head of the world's first democratically elected communist government.

The reality was a government following mainstream socialist policies, yet within two years India's president had dismissed it, arguing "law and order" had broken down. The tactical error of E M S — as he was known — had been to take on two vested interests with his land and educational reform bills. The Hindu Nair landowners, putting aside ancient rivalries, teamed up with Syrian Christian private college managements and destabilised the state. Indira Gandhi was despatched from the central government to investigate. Unlike her father, Prime Minister Pandit Nehru, she was not soft on communism; the government should go, she reported.

E M S was born into a Brahmin family in northern Kerala, then part of the Madras Presidency. The state was castigated at the time by V. K. Rajah, a saintly Hindu reformer, as a madhouse of caste. Travel by train "polluted" the higher castes and as late as 1936 the lower castes threatened to convert en masse to Christianity if they were not allowed to walk past the temples. There was not merely untouchability but unreachability, with prescribed distances as to how near you could approach a Brahmin. E M S rejected this privileged existence, living humbly throughout his life. Indeed he gave his share of the family estate to the Communist Party.

He quit college to join the freedom struggle, was a founder member of the Congress Socialist Party, secretary of the Kerala Congress Party and by 1939 a member of the Madras legislative assembly. In 1940 he was instrumental in founding the clandestine Kerala CP. Between 1945 and 1967 his membership grew from 500 to 200,000. E M S mobilised not only around the poor but channelled aspirations for a Malayalam-speaking state — which was opposed by Nehru's Congress. It was an exciting time in a highly literate state, with street theatre, foot-

ball and cheap social realist novels and short stories.

E M S was not conventionally charismatic and he certainly had sincerity, but an ability to put across Marxism simply, made him a powerful speaker. He wrote several books and *Kerala, Yesterday and Tomorrow* (1967) catches the man and the message, a socialism with local roots. He was the movement's most articulate thinker. During the Communist Party of India's 1963-4 crisis between pro-China leftists and Moscow-leaning rightists, he was a centrist, and when a split became inevitable he aligned himself with the left but was denounced by China because he steered the breakaway CPI (Marxist) from the excesses of Maoism and of the China-backed ultra-left Naxalites.

He was Kerala's chief min-



Namboodiripad... sincerely

ister again in 1967-69 within a left progressive coalition. It did not work. Mired in the corruption of minor parties, conflict with the central government and quarrels between the rump CPI and the stronger CPI(M), the government passed, unsmoothed.

E M S was a paradox. Personally a democrat, he backed Stalin's actions in eastern Europe, and disapproved of Mikhail Gorbachev's attempts to reform the Soviet Union and of China's economic liberalisation. Both admirers and critics believe that had he understood the reasons for China's economic development in his home state of Kerala would have been quicker. In old age, his mind became inflexible. Nonetheless, E M S is one of the outstanding figures of 20th-century Kerala: a secular

He is survived by his wife, two sons and two daughters.

Tom Nossiter

E M Sankara Namboodiripad, politician, born June 14, 1909; died March 19, 1998

Death Notices

FUDGE, Muriel, 84, died March 31, 1998, at the Royal Free Hospital, London. Buried at Golders Green Crematorium, April 2, 1998.

GOLDING, Ruth Anne, died March 31, 1998, aged 44 years. Beloved daughter of the late Mr and Mrs Lillian Golding, of Bedford and Luton. Buried at Luton Crematorium, April 2, 1998. Friends invited to funeral service at Luton Crematorium, April 2, 1998, at 11.00 am. Burial by cremation. Flowers by arrangement only. Tel: 01753 47228 between 9am and 5pm Mon-Fri.

In Memoriam

FRANK, Norman, 72, died March 31, 1998, at the Royal Free Hospital, London. Buried at Golders Green Crematorium, April 2, 1998.

MAURICE, John, died March 31, 1998, aged 72 years. Beloved husband of the late Mrs. Margaret. Buried at Luton Crematorium, April 2, 1998, at 11.00 am. Burial by cremation. Flowers by arrangement only. Tel: 01753 47228 between 9am and 5pm Mon-Fri.

A Country Diary

WEXFORD: Spring in my native county — daffodils in the hedgerows and above them the furze (gorse) as high as trees, lanes spiralling by small rivers, up little hills and down again, the gold of flower and bush in their green settings. The fields are rich in grass or the fertile brown soil glistens wetly after being tanned by the plough — and the depth of the topsoil compared to that of the stony Burren Round a bend a small village appears, stone buildings and houses, an old mill snuggling into the earth, sheltered by great trees, oaks, beech, chestnut, small woods everywhere, all this richness rimmed on south and east by the sea, on the west by the Barrow, one of the Three Sister rivers. During my stay in County Wexford I walked the North Slope which is eight feet below sea level. It was a unique experience to stroll by rich pasture, by newly ploughed fields and suddenly in great tall reeds — I was in one

of Wexford's Sloblands, in the Wexford Wildlife Reserve. The word "slob" is derived from the Irish language, "sleaba" meaning mud or ooze. In the 19th century these Sloblands were reclaimed from the sea and gradually became wintering grounds for a rich variety of wild ducks, geese and swans. Marvellous it was to see the wild duck scooting over the water, the ubiquitous male mallard chasing the female, a few wigeon grazing unperturbed by my feet, further out on the water were red-breasted mergansers and pochards among the wild swans and geese (Brent and Greylag). I saw my first Greenland white-fronted geese and witnessed several V-shaped displays of steadily flying geese while beneath hundreds of what I thought to be wigeon wheeled, dipping, rising all to a continuous "orchestration" of swan whooping, geese honking, truly a day "flowing with birds".

SARAH POYNITZ

Birthdays

Vice-Admiral Michael Boyce, commander-in-chief, Fleet 55; Sir Jack Braham, racing driver, 72; Sir Graham Bright, Conservative MP, 56; Linford Christie, athlete, 36; Larry Coryell, jazz guitarist, 55; Buddy Ebsen, dancer and actor, 90; George MacDonald Fraser, poet and author, 73; Paul

Gambacini, disc jockey, 49; Catherine Gaskin, romantic novelist, 69; Myra Green, director, East European Partnership, VSO, 60; Raymond Gubbay, classical music impresario, 52; Sir Alec Guinness, actor, 84; Barry Hills, racehorse trainer, 51; Sir Ian Hunter, impresario, 75; Penelope Keith, actress, 69; Sir

Peter Middleton, former chairman, BZW, 64; Prof Camille Paglia, writer, 51; Andrew Puddifoot, director, Charter 88, 48; Dermot Reeve, cricketer, 36; Michael Rizzello, sculptor and coin designer, 72; Teddy Sheringham, footballer, 32; Sue Townsend, author, 52; Denis Tuohy, broadcaster, 61.

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

JIMMY Wray, the Labour MP for Glasgow, Baillieston, is anxious to clarify an ambiguous remark about his street-fighting days, in the Monday interview, Page 18, March 30. While he was involved in fights in which knives and swords were used, he wants to make it clear they were used by him. Mr Wray stresses he only ever used his fists.

AN ARTICLE on the Comment page, Page 14, yesterday,

headed, If you've stared death in the face, try keeping your upper lip still, referred to a report by Angela Patmore. We gave the impression that the report, *Killing the Messenger*, had not yet been published. In fact, it came out last year. Copies of it at £35.25, including VAT and p&p, are available from Strex Ltd, 44 Edmund Green, Gosfield, Essex CO9 1US. The telephone number is 01707 478789.

It is the policy of the Guardian to correct errors as soon as possible. Readers may contact the office of the Readers' Editor, Ian Mayes, by telephoning 0171 239 5599 between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Fax: 0171 239 5597. E-mail: reader@guardian.co.uk

Letters: Beverley Cross

Richard Kelly writes: I was sitting behind Beverley Cross (obituary March 23) at a performance of *Strip the Willow*, about life after the bomb, at the Old Empire Theatre in Newcastle upon Tyne, now destroyed, and at every witty line he would laugh loudly in anticipation.

The Empire employed an orchestra in the interval, because the theatre had an agreement with the Musicians' Union to accompany all performances. On this occasion the conductor chose for the interval music *Keep your Sunny Side Up*. "Stand upon your legs/Feel like two fried eggs/Keep your sunny side up." It was apposite.

The man from the local paper gave the play a laudatory review so Beverley went to the newspaper office the following morning and "flattened" him. Well, he deserved it. It was a jolly good play on a very topical subject.

Peter Porteous writes: I was a member of Sam Wanamaker's

Analysis Cyprus

An island divided by hate

Neither Greeks nor Turks have much to win by war, but dangerous posturing makes conflict daily more likely. And Europe's gratuitously offensive attitude to Turkey does not help. By **Martin Woollacott**

A LONG the cease-fire line in Nicosia, the streets leading toward the forward positions of the Greek and Turkish Cypriots were once crisscrossed by dead ends terminating in barbed wire, tank traps, and weapons pits. But after years in which exchanges of fire on what is known as the Green Line have become almost unknown, after decades of a UN presence along the line, and after measures to reduce the number of troops on duty, life has returned to many of these blighted regions, particularly on the Greek side. The splendid 19th-century merchant houses have been restored, and shops, restaurants and coffee houses have sprung up, especially in the handsome quarter near the Famagusta Gate, where some of them are tucked right into the old Venetian fortifications.

Here you can have a glimpse of what the capital of Cyprus might have been like in its entirety had the island not been pulled apart by ethnic strife, and Nicosia's partitioned halves subjected first to the wrecker's ball of war, and then to an unhappy combination of neglect and overdevelopment.

That conflict is now almost a quarter of a century in the past. Yet among those taking coffee in the restaurants are Greek Cypriots ready at a moment's notice to move into firing pits, only a few hundred yards away. Among these reservists — lawyers, schoolmasters, printers, and shopkeepers — many of the older officers and NCOs are veterans of the fighting in 1974. That was when Turkish forces invaded the island and in two campaigns, consolidated a Turkish northern zone, which later came to call itself the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

These men already patrol the areas along the Green Line when doing their periodic tours as reservists. The possibility that they might have to move into their positions in earnest suddenly appeared less remote this week, with the start of negotiations between the European Union and 11 aspirants for membership. Among the 11 is Cyprus, and the arrival of a Greek Cypriot delegation in Brussels set off an exchange of threats and counter threats between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and between Turkey and Greece, with some Russian posturing thrown in as well.

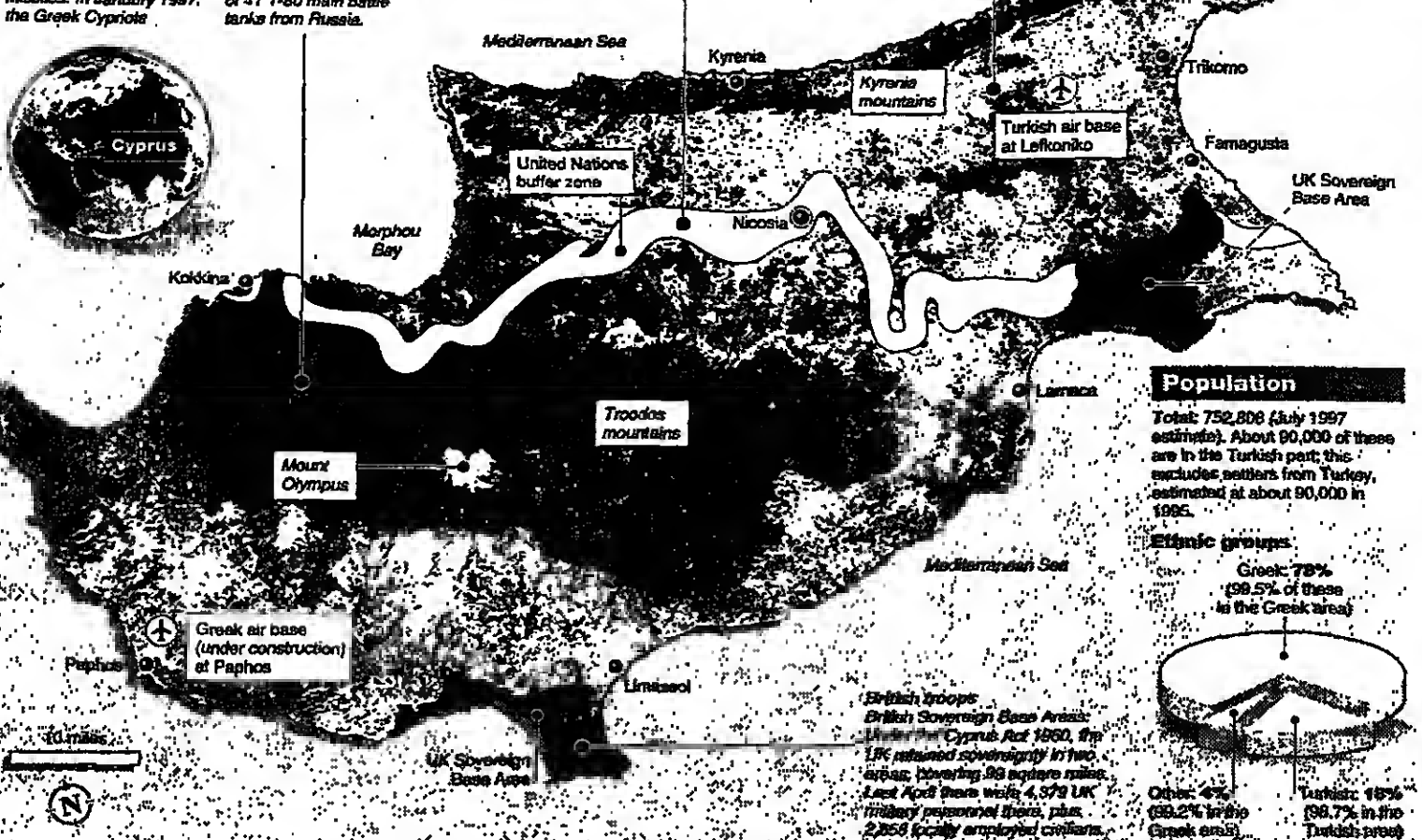
Turkey repeated its now

Greek forces
Troops: About 11,000
Troops (about 90% of them conscripts, the rest seconded from Greece), plus 88,000 reserves.
Greece is reported to be forming a mechanised brigade on the island.
Defence spending: about \$500 million a year.
Missiles: In January 1997, the Greek Cypriots

concluded an agreement with Russia to buy a number of S-300 long-range surface-to-air missiles. These have a range of 90 miles and are designed to counter Turkish air superiority.
Tanks: In 1996, the Greek Cypriot forces took delivery of 41 T-80 main battle tanks from Russia.

UN troops
Last year there were 1,180 UN Peacekeeping Forces in Cyprus (UNFICYP), plus 35 civilian police. They supervise the cease-fire and maintain the buffer zone between the lines of the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot forces and the Cyprus National Guard.

Turkish forces
30,000 troops (of which 4,000 are active and 26,000 are reserves), including 235 main tanks, about 100 armoured personnel carriers and 3 patrol boats. Defence spending: about \$510 million a year.



Population
Total: 752,000 (July 1997 estimate). About 90,000 of these are in the Turkish part; this includes settlers from Turkey, estimated at about 90,000 in 1995.

Ethnic groups
Greek: 78% (99.5% of those in the Greek area)
Turkish: 18% (98.7% in the Turkish area)
Other: 4% (98.2% in the Greek area)

national put it in a recent report on Cyprus (1). "It is obvious that a crisis involving both the UN and the EU in confrontation with Turkey could result."

Cyprus is a part of the wider Eastern Mediterranean problem and, above all, of the problem of the relationship between Turkey and Europe. Europe's failure to recognise that it needs a coherent diplomatic strategy for Turkey is at the root of what has gone wrong in the region. The lack of such a strategy means that Europe's Turkey policy has

been pushed this way and that by Greece's fears and sometimes by Greece's mischief-making. By Germany's anxiety to avoid an issue which is a political loser in the anti-immigration atmosphere in that country, and by the readiness of other EU members to postpone and procrastinate over Turkey. This procrastination reached its extreme at the EU Summit in Luxembourg last year, when Turkey was not only relegated to the extreme back of the queue for membership but was gratuitously insulted by

the Luxembourg prime minister, Jean Claude Juncker. At that moment the chances of a breakthrough on Cyprus diminished sharply and the chances of a dangerous standoff between Greece and Turkey sharply increased. Since then, an angry Turkey has not had to look far for reminders of how it is regarded by some leading European figures, the most recent being late last month when Wolfgang Schäuble, Helmut Kohl's preferred successor in the CDU, told a committee that Turkey's

inclusion in the EU could endanger its identity and political workability (2). Turkey's serious internal problems include the insurgency in the south-east, the social stresses consequent on the large movements of internal migration and urbanisation, the polarisation between Islamist and secular political forces, and an activist military which intervened politically last year to bump the Islamist Refah Party out of power. So qualms like those of Schäuble are understandable. But what seems to be lacking in Europe is an understanding of how much Europe is central to the secular, democratic and liberal programme in Turkey. To back away publicly at that plank is dangerous. It not only threatens the peace of the region, but could take the heart out of the very political forces in Turkey which Europeans should champion and recognise as the Turkish arm of European social democracy.

European insensitivity to Turkey has undermined the plan to bring about a Cyprus settlement and Cypriot entry into the EU by encouraging Ankara to see these as phases toward its own incorporation in the union. The idea was that the Turks would make short work of the objections of the Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktaş, if they were really convinced of Europe's

of question which can be used to avoid progress but can be settled in a week or so once the will is there on both sides.

Whether the Turkish part of Cyprus should be recognised as a state, if only for a few minutes and as a preliminary to federation, is an utterly vexed question; but it could similarly be disposed of. President Clerides, after making some imaginative proposals in talks a few years ago, came to the conclusion that neither Denktaş nor the Turkish government then had the will to settle. He had cause for disappointment. But his strategy then was twofold: to strengthen defence connections with Greece — hence the plans for Paphos bases for Greek aircraft and missiles to cover them — and to advance negotiations with the EU. Both, it seems, to have reasonable would put pressure on Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots to reach a settlement before entry talks were too far advanced. That is still the Greek Cypriot view, as expressed yesterday by Yannis Kasoulides, the foreign minister, when he said that the accession talks will "act as a catalyst for the re-unification of our country". What Clerides did was not necessarily wrong, but in combination with the worsening relations between the EU and Turkey, it could have the opposite result to that which he intended.

WAR is so manifestly a stupid and dangerous course for everybody concerned that it is still very unlikely. But, if the situation is to be transformed in a positive way, there will have to be truly serious efforts in 1998. They should include offering Turkey a place in the EU membership queue that Ankara finds acceptable, an attempt to get broader negotiations going between Greece and Turkey, and a number of concessions by both sides in Cyprus itself. At the moment talks cannot even be contemplated because of Denktaş's insistence that they be state-to-state rather than community-to-community. Removing this obstacle and others, however, will be of no avail unless the deterioration in relations between Turkey and Europe is caught and decisively reversed in the coming months.

Sources: (1) Cyprus: In Search of Peace; (2) Financial Times, March 21 1998. **Graphics sources:** The Military Balance 1997/8, published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (particular thanks to Colonel Terence Taylor); The Middle East & North Africa 1998 (Europa Publications); US Library of Congress (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cy>); CIA World Factbook (<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>); Satellite photographs: Earth Satellite Corporation/Science Photo Library. **Graphics:** Finbar Sheehy. **Research:** Mark Espiner. **Researcher:** Martin Woollacott is the Guardian's foreign-affairs commentator.

Countdown to confrontation

1960: Cyprus, a British colony, becomes independent.
1964: Greek and Turkish Cypriots fall into violent inter-communal conflict. Military forces build up. Greek troops are sent to deter a Turkish invasion; they stay until 1967. The UN sends a peacekeeping force, which is still there.
1974: The Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktaş, calls on Turkey to intervene and protect the Turkish Cypriot community. Turkey invades Cyprus.
1974: Turkey sends more troops and divides the island with the "Attila Line", which runs from Morphou through Nicosia to Famagusta. Turkey

now holds 37% of the island.
1975: The Turkish occupied area of Cyprus declares itself to be the "Turkish Federated State of Cyprus".
1990: Cyprus applies for EU membership. Denktaş declares that this complicates the search for a political settlement.
1994: Denktaş warns that if Greek Cyprus is admitted to the EU, the Turkish part of Cyprus would opt for integration with Turkey.
1995: The Greek part of Cyprus hosts a military exercise which involves the Greek air force and navy. Later in the year

Turkish fighters violate the Greek part's air space.
1996: Soldiers from both sides are shot dead in isolated incidents in the UN buffer zone.
1997: The Greek Cypriot government signs an agreement with Russia to buy surface-to-air missiles. The Turkish Cypriots warn that they are prepared to use military force to prevent deployment.
1997: Talks aiming at a political settlement begin, with Richard Holbrooke as US mediator. But the Greek Cypriot government's objective of EU membership for the whole island is seen by the Turkish Cypriots as unacceptable.

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FinanceGuardian

Chairman denies that 'clash of egos' killed pharmaceuticals merger

Glaxo rules out bid for SKB

Julia Finch

GLAXO Wellcome chairman Sir Richard Sykes last night ruled out a £50 billion hostile bid for SmithKline Beecham and insisted his planned friendly merger with SKB did not fail because of a personal clash.

Sir Richard told MPs that aggressive takeovers among big drug firms were "almost impossible" because of the vast sums involved.

Giving evidence to the Commons science and technology committee, Sir Richard said he was making his first public comments since the collapse in February of a £100 billion merger which would have created the third largest company in the world.

The deal was abandoned, wiping £13 billion off the value of the groups, when Sir Richard and SKB chief executive Jan Leschly were unable to agree on the allocation of jobs in the new organisation.

According to SKB, Sir Richard reneged on agreements made when the merger plan was first hatched. But Sir Richard said that Glaxo had "acted in good faith, and negotiations are negotiations. SmithKline Beecham were the ones that broke off relations, not Glaxo Wellcome."

He added: "We got to the point where we did not believe the benefits outweighed the risks." The companies had negotiated for 22 days to find a merger deal that would "maintain the motivational enthusiasm and intellectual drive of the people in research and development".

At the end of that period, he said, "we had considerable misgivings". After the deal was called off many institutional investors said it should be revived if it could deliver the substantial benefits to shareholders the groups had at first suggested.

Notebook

Rose of revival blooms at Argos



Edited by Lisa Buckingham

ARGOS will launch a share buyback plan tomorrow as the last shot in its defence against the £1.6 billion takeover bid from Great Universal Stores.

The move follows yesterday's clearance of the takeover by Trade and Industry Secretary Margaret Beckett, who rightly accepted the view that a takeover would be against the public interest.

Following last week's deal with GUS rival Littlewoods and the announcement of a new retail strategy, Argos is in a much stronger position than could have been imagined when the battle began in February this year.

Then, Argos was crippled by two top executives falling ill and another disappointing Christmas. Now it has a vigorous leader in the former Marks & Spencer and Burton executive, Stuart Rose.

Second, it means GUS cannot walk away as easily as it might have done, since the consequence would be a strengthened rival and an even greater impediment to the group's own ambitions in direct selling.

Argos will no doubt tell shareholders that the central issue is the future of its core retailing operation — and that the future is rosy, as it were, under the experienced retail hand of Stuart Rose.

There is no doubt, too, that an injection of retail skills will make life easier and more exciting for shoppers, so presumably better for the company's bottom line.

But, as ever, the central issue is price, and how far GUS will have to raise its 570p-a-share offer.

It will be a tough week for GUS chairman Lord Wolfson to make some kind of an assessment of how low he can stay, and yet still succeed.

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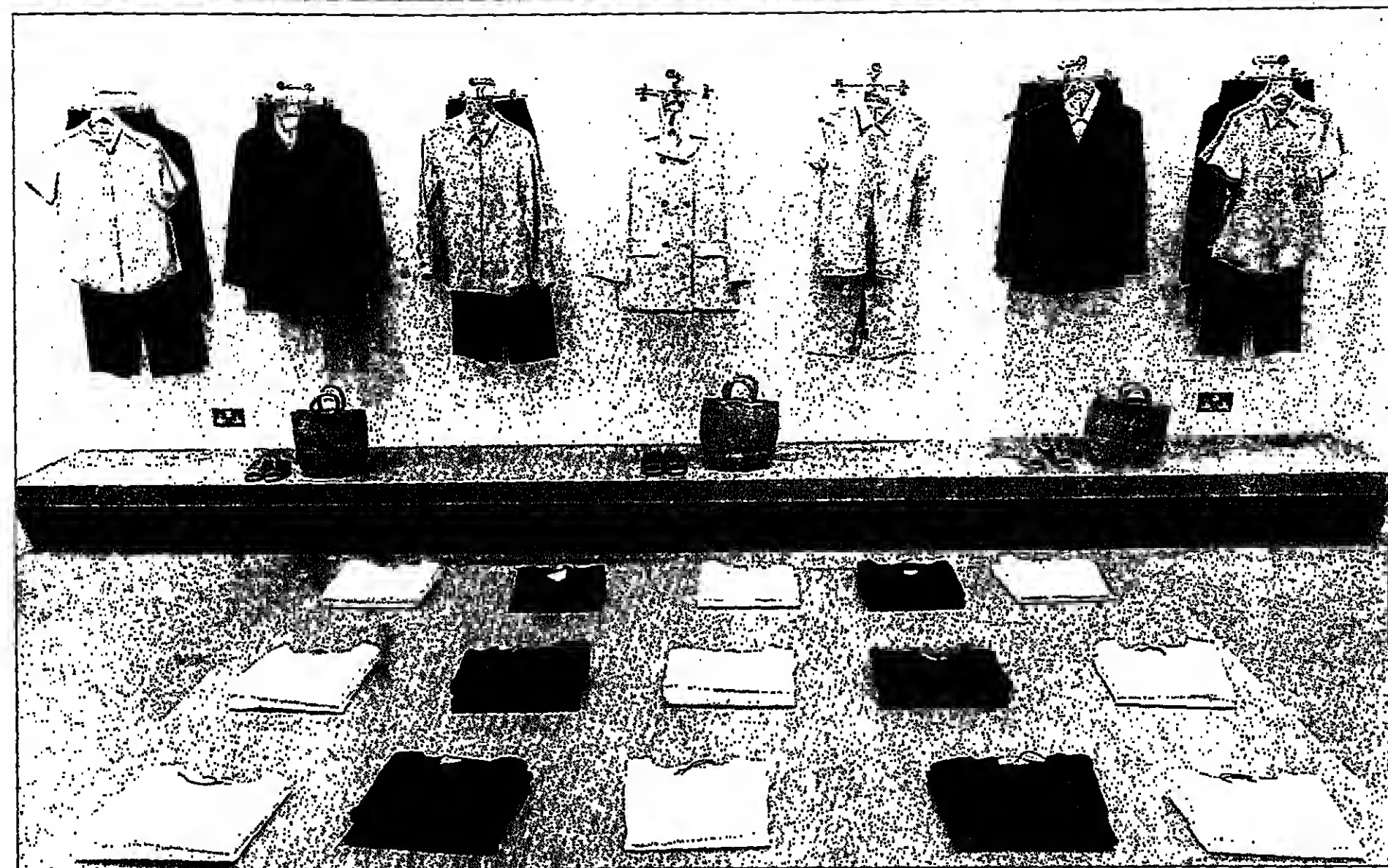
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But, as ever, the central issue is price, and how far GUS will have to raise its 570p-a-share offer.

It will be a tough week for GUS chairman Lord Wolfson to make some kind of an assessment of how low he can stay, and yet still succeed.

Argos will no doubt tell shareholders that the central issue is the future of its core retailing operation — and that the future is rosy, as it were, under the experienced retail hand of Stuart Rose.

There is no doubt, too, that an injection of retail skills will make life easier and more exciting for shoppers, so presumably better for the company's bottom line.



Comfort and joy... Nicole Farhi's range of good-looking and wearable clothes at the new French Connection store in New Bond Street, London

PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

French Connection plans £11m expansion

Nicole Farhi to spearhead push into world market, writes **Pauline Springett**

FRENCH Connection, the clothing group which also owns the Nicole Farhi chain, yesterday unveiled ambitious expansion plans designed to thrust it to the forefront of the international fashion sector.

The company is planning to spend £11 million on the expansion during 1998, twice its spend during last year. Of this, \$4 million will go on the development of a 16,000 square feet Nicole Farhi flagship store and restaurant in New York, which is due to open in February 1999.

Chairman David Bernstein, speaking as the group unveiled a 32 per cent rise in pre-tax profits at 28.2 million, said the company's success showed it was the right time to expand. "In terms of general visibility of the French Connection and Nicole Farhi brands, the profile of the

group is really going to expand and explode," he said. The company currently had 46 stores and planned to open another eight this year, he said. In terms of square foot of selling space, that equates to 120,000 compared to 100,000 square feet at the start of 1997.

He added that, by the end of 1998, the company intended to have 140,000 square feet of space.

Nicole Farhi Ladieswear will have 60 per cent more space in Selfridges' London store, and 800 square feet in Selfridges' new store in Trafalgar Park, Manchester. Selfridges in London will also carry the Nicole Farhi Menswear range.

While maintaining its focus on its two core brands, French Connection is also planning to extend the ranges of products sold. There are plans to expand Nicole Farhi

home furnishings which has already been tested in the Sloane Street store.

Other plans include a move into mail order; a French Connection catalogue will be sent out later this month. The bathroom range is to be extended, and a full make-up and skincare range introduced later in the year.

Mr Bernstein, the new chairman of Manchester City football club, said that French Connection's Winter 1997 range had performed well and forward orders for Winter 1998 were ahead of last year, a scenario which was being repeated by Nicole Farhi.

Mr Bernstein said that pink was the current hot colour at French Connection, with Nicole Farhi going for more muted, neutral colours such as grey.

Unlike many companies, French Connection has benefited from the strength of sterling because its imports exceed its exports. French Connection shares rose by 25 pence, to close at 427.5 pence.

Fine fashion that can be worn

BEING avant garde is all very well, but the success of Nicole Farhi and French Connection proves the virtue of making clothes men and women really want to wear.

It is an obvious concept, but balancing the changing demands of fashion with more practical considerations is a trick few can pull off successfully.

Nicole Farhi can, which is why her catwalk shows, while never rocking fashion to its foundations, are always well received.

Like Betty Jackson and Jasper Conran, with whom she is often compared, Farhi's strength lies in interpreting trends for her customers without making them look stupid.

In the autumn, for example, her customers can expect to find avant-garde shapes such as pleated skirts — as pioneered this season by Helmut Lang — in a more workable, flatter-

ing form. It is an ability that has earned the French-born designer a secure position in the big league of British fashion.

Informing everything is her own particular style: relaxed, easy shapes in deluxe fabrics. Farhi is not a designer to ignore the comfort factor. The soft, roomy, charcoal-grey suits and sweaters which feature heavily in her autumn and winter menswear collection are quintessential Nicole Farhi.

French Connection performs a similar feat at the high-street level.

Often bracketed along with Oasis, Jigsaw and Warehouse, French Connection appeals to young women who have outgrown stores like Top Shop, but who still want a fashion content in their wardrobe.

The label is adept at slipping high-fashion winners into its more everyday collections. Last Christmas, French Connection's short



Simply successful: Slip by Farhi PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

sequined slip — not quite a slip at £160, but still much cheaper than the designer versions — was the party dress of the season. This summer, it is a grey two-tone trouser suit, trendy but not overly so, which is flying out of the shops.

Arms-merger plan adrift

David Gow
Industrial Editor

ACROSS-PARTY group of MPs yesterday exposed gaping holes in merger plans by European aerospace companies.

Members of the Commons defence and trade and industry committees accused the three of failing to come up with a clear plan or detailed timetable.

Kevin Smith, BAe's deputy group managing director, in the first comments by a senior executive on the plans submitted to the British, French and

German governments on Friday, virtually conceded that they faced an "insuperable obstacle" with the French company state-owned.

The merger plans envisage a publicly-quoted company, the European Aerospace & Defence Company or Euroco, which would embrace the civilian Airbus business, missiles, defence electronics and satellites in four divisions.

Airbus itself is due to become a public company next year.

But, under repeated questioning from Menzies Campbell, Liberal Democrat defence spokesman, Mr Smith and defence industry colleagues admitted that different ownership structures and the lack of a common procure-

ment policy rendered merger prospects difficult.

One executive said privately: "There will be no real European restructuring until we get a common market and common government requirements, and there's no evidence of that so far. We also need a pan-European regulator for the industry."

Aerospace and Dasa, the German company, now hold 37.5 per cent each of Airbus, the model for Euroco, while highly profitable BAe holds just 22 per cent. MPs pointed out that Euroco could end up dominated by the French government and Daimler-Benz.

Dasa's parent, in which Deutsche Bank holds a quarter of the equity.

Joy unbundled for viewers

Simon Beavis
Media Business Editor

CABLE television users are to get more freedom to choose the channels they subscribe to after regulators yesterday started an overhaul of the "bundling" of channels, which forces subscribers to take as many as 30 channels without choice.

In a move that will force BSkyB and the cable companies to restructure pricing and could force unpopular channels out of business, the Independent Television Commission is now insisting that subscribers be allowed to sign up for smaller packages of basic programmes.

The measures will also give viewers easy access to premium movie and sports services. Unveiling the proposals, the ITC said bundling channels was anti-competitive but under the new rules the ITC will ban "minimum carriage" — where channel producers only allow operators to carry their channels if they are forced on nearly all subscribers. There will also be a ban on forcing subscribers to buy one premium channel to get another.

ITC chairman Sir Robin Biggam said: "If you go into a supermarket, you don't have to buy 80 per cent of the stuff on the shelves."

The commission has requested submissions on the implementation of the plan to be sent to it by May 5. The ITC aims to have the new system operating by the autumn, when digital pay-TV services are due to start on satellite, terrestrial and cable. City analysts were wary of predicting the impact on BSkyB, 40 per cent-owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.

Last night, the cable industry welcomed the ITC's move. "We have consistently maintained that the carriage obligations that are imposed on pay-TV retailers restrict viewer choice and hold back growth in the pay-TV market," said a statement issued by Bob Frost, chief executive of the Cable Communications Association.

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Prescott bans water cut-offs

Nicholas Bannister
Chief Business Correspondent

WATER companies will be forbidden to disconnect domestic customers who fail to pay their bills, under new proposals put forward yesterday by John Prescott, the deputy prime minister and environmental supremo.

However the government's long-awaited review of water charging has failed to resolve the issue of what, in the long term, should replace rateable value as the basis for calculating water bills.

The previous government had laid down that water companies would have to stop using rateable value as the basis for unmeasured water bills by the year 2000.

Labour's review concluded that unmeasured water bills for domestic customers should continue, and it proposed to bring forward new legislation to allow rateable value charging to continue into the next century.

But the government clearly favours water metering as the long term solution. It has come down against compulsory water metering and plans to allow customers to have meters installed free of charge.

Such customers, in a departure from meter water company practice, would be allowed to revert to the old unmeasured charging system within a year if they wished to.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.463 Germany 3.011 Malaysia 8.10 Singapore 5.24

Austria 27.15 Greece 325.07 Malta 0.840 South Africa 8.24

Belgium 61.68 Hong Kong 12.56 Netherlands 3.375 Spain 253.90

Canada 2.218 India 36.11 New Zealand 2.911 Sweden 13.11

Cyprus 0.677 Ireland 1.196 Norway 12.45 Switzerland 2.67

Denmark 11.53 Israel 4.03 Portugal 308.96 Turkey 300.380

Finland 9.214 Italy 2.967 Saudi Arabia 6.78 USA 1.638

France 10.000

Supplied by Reuters (including ripple, wheel and mortar)

صكرا من الامل

Football

European Cup Winners' Cup semi-final, first leg: Vicenza v Chelsea

Vialli back home to stress the value of striking away

Martin Thorpe in Vicenza

THE sunglasses worn by many of the Chelsea squad as they hit town yesterday had more to do with cool than shade. There is not much sun in an airport terminal.

Hopefully dressing like the locals does not indicate that Chelsea think they have already made it as a European force, now they are playing in the Continent's most fashionable and football-conscious country.

A smooth passage in this

tournament, fifth place in the Premiership plus Sunday's Coca-Cola Cup triumph are enough to give any team delusions of grandeur. The player-manager Gianluca Vialli's job is to refocus the thoughts of any player blinded by success.

Yes, tonight Chelsea fly Britain's lone flag in Europe, but this season's Cup Winners' Cup is one of the weakest ever because so many of the good teams can now find a place in the expanded UEFA Cup.

Yes, Vicenza look an ordinary side on paper and sit 11th in Serie A, with the Italian Cup the only major trophy in their 96-year existence.

But what Vialli knows only too well from his long career in the midst of that any Italian team is always difficult to beat. "I know they are the best in the world about the way they prepare," he said. "I also know Vicenza and their manager well and though they do not have any superstars in the team, they work very hard and are very organised. The game is going to be very hard, very tight."

As with the quarter-final against Real Betis, Vialli has told his players they need tonight to score one away goal at least.

Gone are the days when 0-0

away in the first leg was good enough to win a European two-leg tie, as Alex Ferguson recently found to his cost.

"Nil-nil really is no good," agreed Chelsea's coach Graham Rix. "You want to keep it tight obviously, but you need an away goal. You can draw 0-0 away and come back to your place and think, 'Oh it's a fortress'. But how do you approach the game? Do you go out willy-nilly and leave yourselves open at the back? They score one, then you've got to score two and you're chasing the game. And you don't want that."

"It's a game of chess, and if

Wise...midfield guard

we can come away with a draw here having scored an away goal, then they've got to come at us to a certain extent at Stamford Bridge."

That is exactly the situation Betis found in London after Ture Andre Flo's two goals in Sevilla, and led to the team that Rudi Garcia built capitalising on Spanish anxiety to run out 3-1 winners that night.

Flo, a substitute on Sunday, is likely to be asked to reproduce his last-round heroics alongside Gianfranco Zola, who has recovered from a

Zola...recovered

groin strain from Wembley. Vialli will probably keep Mark Hughes company on the bench, and the third Italian, Roberto Di Matteo, will stalk midfield alongside his grand dog Dennis Wise. Vicenza are expected to line up with five at the back and their top scorer Pasquale Luisi alone up front.

After a weekend of English crowd trouble, one hopes that trend is not exported by the 2,000 Chelsea fans expected. An alcohol ban in the town should help dampen spirits and obviate the need for more dark glasses on Friday morning.

Scottish Premier Division
Rangers 3 Hibernian 0

McCoist puts Rangers back in the title race

Patrick Glenn

RANGERS galloped into a share of the Premier Division lead with Celtic, who are now only ahead on goal difference, after a second-half scoring burst last night that produced their most impressive victory in months.

By the time Gordon Durie, reappearing as a substitute after a five-week absence, scored the third with an angled drive from the right, the champions were already beyond recall, thanks to two goals inside a minute from Ally McCoist and Jonas Thern early in the second half.

Rangers' expected superiority soon materialised but, even though deployed in an aggressive 4-3-3 formation by their manager Walter Smith, they lacked the imagination to do any telling damage in the first half to a sometimes heroic visiting defence.

Indeed Rangers were so competently contained that they were limited to shots from outside the penalty area and crosses, mainly from Brian Laudrup, that were intercepted by an alert and determined back four of Darrin Bode, Brian Welsh, Jimmy Boco and Willie Miller.

Rangers' first-half finishing was characterised by a Stuart McCall free-kick from the edge of the box which the Scotland midfielder buried and shot high over the bar.

Marco Negri also spurned an opportunity when Gordon Patric carried the ball out of defence, but the Italian's low drive was comfortably gathered by Bryan Gunn.

Typically, Hibs drew encouragement and contrived some means of their own, with Grant Brebner creating an opening for Steve Crawford, only to see the striker's half-volley from 12 yards touched over by Anti Nienl, the Finnish goalkeeper deputising for Andy Goram, missing with a virus.

Hibs spent the first 12 minutes of the second half looking the better side, but it was only time enough for Rangers to summon up the strength to score two goals inside 90 seconds which turned the match on its head.

McCoist was first on target, launching himself into a fancy crouched bear from six yards following a Jorg Albertz free-kick from the left. Gunn barely saw the ball as it hurtled past.

The match was virtually over as a contest when Albertz again did the ground work for the second. This time the German carried the ball to the by-line on the left and his low cut-back was met by Thern, whose right-foot shot from 12 yards flew to Gunn's right.

Rangers (4-3-3): Nienl; Moore, Patric; Boco, Welsh, Miller, Bode, Laudrup, Negri, McCall, Durie, Albertz, Thern, Gunn, Crawford, Goram, Stewart, McCoist, Negri, McGuffey (Stirling).

Champions League semi-final, first leg
Juventus 4 Monaco 1

Del Piero the hat-trick hero

Paddy Agnew

CLASS will out — the class of the Juventus golden boy Alessandro Del Piero, who last night single-handedly set up his team for a third successive final by scoring a hat-trick in their 4-1 win over Monaco.

After the opening half-hour, Monaco were swept aside by a classic Italian performance in which Juventus took maximum advantage of everything coming their way.

Del Piero's three goals came from a free-kick and two penalties, all crystal-clear decisions for the referee and all bearing witness to unerring precision. The French midfielder Zinedine Zidane wrapped up the match, and probably the tie, when adding the fourth two minutes from time.

Monaco's five-man defence, complete with the 20-year-old sweeper Pierre Christoval and the flamboyant Fabien Barthez in goal, seemed in no difficulty early on despite the inevitable Juventus territorial superiority. On the two occasions in the opening half-hour that the combined skills of Zinedine Zidane and Alessandro Del Piero penetrated the massed French ranks, Barthez was quick off his line to make important clearances on the edge of his area.

Then up stepped Del Piero. From a free-kick for a foul on Zidane by Martin Djeto, the Juventus No. 10 struck a text-

book, 34th-minute goal, curling the ball inside Barthez's right-hand post.

However, Monaco's Portuguese defender Francisco Costa, five minutes after coming on as a substitute, struck a 44th-minute equaliser from a corner with a scrambled shot from the edge of the area that appeared to be deflected by the Juventus defender Moreno Torricelli.

Betraying their youthful inexperience, Monaco were caught immediately by Juventus on the injury-time restart when again Del Piero worked a little magic to send Zidane through.

Barthez went for the ball but got Zidane's ankles instead, leaving the Russian referee Nikolai Levnikov no option but to award a penalty.

Del Piero who also stepped up to strike home the penalty with arguably even more precision than his previous successful free-kick. Monaco had to start all over again.

Del Piero converted his second penalty in the 82nd minute after Mohamed Konic brought down striker Filippo Inzaghi. From then on, it was one way traffic with Barthez doing well to deny Inzaghi on three occasions.

The other Champions League semi-final, first leg between Real Madrid and Borussia Dortmund was delayed 75 minutes last night due to a broken goal post at the Bernabeu Stadium.

FA Cup profile



Image conscious... Steve Thompson sprucing up Sheffield United for the Sunday's tie at Old Trafford

TREVOR SMITH

David Hopps finds the Bramall Lane 'caretaker' looking to clean up against Newcastle

Thompson can't stop laughing

SHEFFIELD United have found themselves in the FA Cup semi-finals, somewhat to their surprise, so it was only fair that Steve Thompson should spruce up his image. "Just make sure you call me the caretaker," he insisted. "I'm not the caretaker. They don't make me look the bloody ground up."

Not yet, anyway. This season United have parted company with their manager, chairman, chief executive, physiotherapist, kit man and half the team. If Thompson walks into Bramall Lane next week to find a set of keys on his desk, he will know what to do with them.

Put in charge until the end of the season after Nigel Spackman resigned in frustration a month ago, he consoles himself with the fact that "the groundsman's cat is still here."

Laughter has rung from the manager's office since United turned to this fourth 42-year-old, fortunate for once to be in the right place at the right time. Initially it was laughter in adversity, now it has become a "I can't believe my luck" sort of laughter, with New-

castle United standing between them and a Wembley final and their challenge for a place in the First Division play-offs intact against all expectations.

The lower divisions will be rooting for Thompson, an unassuming football man steeped in the game at the likes of Lincoln City, Notts County and Southend, and three months' coaching at Doncaster, where the hot water ran

had lost in the Second Division play-off final, and eight months' dole followed before he found a coaching post at Bramall Lane.

It was the club he had supported as a boy, catching this No. 71 bus from Prince of Wales Road, leaving off at the old Silver Blades ice rink and hurrying to the Kop end. He got a job with the Yorkshire Electricity Board but a business course

won in extra-time, so I'm not complaining."

Howard Wilkinson, the FA's technical director, has also looked in. Thompson, who began as a robust central defender under him at Boston United, was given another motto — "Those who look to the bench for solutions are best on the bench." Thompson admitted: "I've not had to tell our lads that. No praise is high enough. They've hung in there at a time of great adversity."

To remind him to relish the good times, Thompson has requisitioned United's chief scout, Fred Eyre, a wickedly funny after-dinner speaker, as a perpetual sounding board. "They back a long way. 'About 15 years, or four stones,' according to Eyre. When they were reunited last summer they would meet up at eight o'clock every morning at Tesco for tea and toast.

"Next week I could be the villain, next year I could be back at Tesco stacking shelves," mused Thompson. "He's no need to worry," said Eyre. "I can assure you we've behind him 80 per cent." Half of Sheffield will happily double that.

'No praise is high enough. They've hung in there at a time of great adversity'

Top Italian clubs faked transfer deals say tax police

SIX top Italian clubs are alleged to have evaded taxes through fake transfer deals.

One person has been arrested and 177 have been charged with fiscal fraud, tax police said in Siena. Several club officials have been questioned and the results of the three-year investigation codenamed Operation Offshore — have been turned over to prosecutors, who must decide whether to press a case.

The Serie A clubs allegedly involved are Internazionale, Fiorentina, Parma, Brescia, Bari and Atalanta of Bergamo. There are also two Serie B clubs, Torino and Lucchese.

The fake deals did not involve top players but youngsters from junior teams and others who had long retired, the police reported. The total tax evasion was reported as four billion lire (\$1.5 million) on contracts of about 10 billion lire (\$2.8 million). The figures were low in a sport where transfer fees for the best strikers often exceed 25 million.

Parma's executive director Michele Vva denied any wrongdoing by the Parmesan team. Inter and Fiorentina officials were not immediately available for comment.

No joke for Portugal's fans as radio plays the fool

MILLIONS of Portuguese fans were tricked yesterday into believing that their country had been given late entry into the World Cup. But the announcement was national radio's idea of an April Fool joke.

A Lisbon broadcaster announced that Iran had decided not to compete in the finals in France this summer "for security reasons" and that FIFA had designated Portugal as the replacement team.

The station broadcast spoof declarations in English from officials confirming the story. It is no joke, however, that Colombia's former Newcastle striker Faustino Asprilla is expected to miss the finals because of injury. Colombia face England, Romania and Tunisia in Group G.

Asprilla, who returned to Parma in a £7 million transfer in January, aggravated a leg muscle injury while playing in recent friendly matches. "I fear he will not be able to get back to full fitness for the World Cup," said the president of the Colombian Football Federation, Alvaro Fina.

Asprilla's injury will also affect Parma's hopes of qualifying for a UEFA Cup place next season.

First Division
Nottingham Forest 3 Sheffield United 0

Campbell gives Forest bounce

John Lawson

KEVIN CAMPBELL scored twice last night as Nottingham Forest, beaten 4-2 at Charlton on Saturday, bounced back with this victory that sent them four points clear of Sunderland at the top of the table. But they were made to work hard before the striker's second goal after 81 minutes.

If United had an eye on the semi-final it was certainly not evident as they attempted to out-physical Forest in the early stages. But Dave Bassett's side, stung by their weekend setback at Charlton, were in no mood to capitulate and produced a string of moves that would have graced the Premiership.

Within 60 seconds of the start Scot Gemmill created an opening that Geoff Thomas thumped past the angle and as the pressure mounted, Simon Tracey saved well from Gemmill.

Such was the vibrancy of Forest's stacking play that a breakthrough was inevitable and Pierre van Hooft donked delivered an *hors d'oeuvre* for the main course when he had Tracey stretching spectacularly to palm away a venomous free-kick.

Forest scored the goal they deserved when Chris Bart-Williams got the better of Shaun Derry to pick out

Thomas with his cross and a left-foot shot was accurate and powerful for Tracey.

United might have had an instant equaliser but Ian Hamilton failed to profit from Graham Stuart's knock-down, firing a half-volley inches over the bar. Forest's response was immediate: they surged into a two-goal lead in the 86th minute when Bart-Williams was again the provider, this time on the right, and Kevin Campbell's near-post header took him to 20 goals this season.

Steve Stone and Van Hooft donked came close to adding to Forest's lead, the Dutch striker sending a searing right-foot shot over the top before United determined not to be a soft touch twice hit the woodwork.

Chris Wilder clipped the bar with a 30-yard effort and there was another warning for Forest when Stuart, with only Dave Beasant to beat, struck a post.

Tottenham have solved the saga over their fitness coach by appointing a London-based, Kinnie Odetoynbo. He steps in for the club to secure a work permit for Fritz Schmid.

Nottingham Forest (4-2-2): Gemmill; Donald, Cooper, Christie, Ross; Stone, Bart-Williams, Campbell, Van Hooft. Sheffield United (4-1-1): Tracey; Wilder, Sandford, Morris, Derry, Stuart, Hamilton; Saunders, Peterson, G. Cain (Boots).

QPR 0 Wolverhampton Wanderers 0

Toothless Wolves disarmed by the Jones charm school

Trevor Mayhew

QUEENS Park Rangers have recently added beef to their ranks while Wolves have their Bull back at Loftus Road but neither side could summon the steely to complement their strength so both goalkeepers went home without having to make an authentic save.

The point gained will probably ensure that both teams remain in the First Division. Rangers will not be relegated and Wolves will not make the play-offs. Nor on this depressing evidence, will Mark McGhee's men hold any terrors for Sunday's FA Cup semi-final opponents Arsenal.

With Neil Ruddock following Vinnie Jones to Loftus Road it is a fair bet that Rangers will not win any new friends at the charm school.

Part of Jones's appeal comes from the length of his throw-ins, while Ruddock has been encouraged by the manager Ray Harford to launch long balls from deep. The best of the bunch early on caught Dean Richards in two minds but Mike Sheron blazed wide.

Jones was soon showing his true colours. Jabbing Steve Claridge neck-high in a characteristic response to his opponent's exaggerated fall on the 18-yard line.

He duly collected the first of what is likely to be many yel-

low cards in his new employment.

Certainly QPR were more aggressive and swifter into the tackle than Loftus Road regulars could remember. They now have genuine pace down the right through Tony Scott, though he also spotted his good work with decency to overhit crosses. He shot low and accurately as did Nigel Quashie a little later, but Hans Segers saw them all the way.

Wolves fared no better. Claridge and Steve Bull seeking a wavelength to share and Paul Simpson getting to go it alone when Bull was screening out for the pass. Just before half-time Neil Emblem seized on Kevin Muscat's cut-back but his side-footed attempt cannoned off Karl Ready.

You sensed that Wolves would not be able to survive the night without being made to pay for their tardiness at the back.

Steve Sedgley then dallied too long and allowed Sheron to get away. It was a lone mission, however, and when his finish flew across the goalmouth nobody was on hand to lend a touch.

Queens Park Rangers (4-4-2): Harper; Barclay, Reedy, Ruddock, Morris; Scott, Jones, Quashie, Strain, Sheron, Galloway.

Wolves (4-3-3): Segers; Mical, Williams, Sedgley, Richards; Proggart, Emblem, Osborn, Simpson; Claridge, Bull.

Referee: J. Kirby (Sheff Wed).

Results

Football

EUROPEAN CUP
Semi-final, first leg
Juventus (2) 4 AS Monaco (1) 1
AS Monaco (1) 1 AS Monaco (1) 1
AS Monaco (1) 1 AS Monaco (1) 1

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE
First Division
Nottingham Forest (2) 3 Sheffield United (0) 0
Nottingham Forest (2) 3 Sheffield United (0) 0

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE
Premier Division
Rangers (0) 0 Hibernian (0) 0
Rangers (0) 0 Hibernian (0) 0

UNION LEAGUE
Premier Division
Rangers (0) 0 Hibernian (0) 0
Rangers (0) 0 Hibernian (0) 0

1st Man City (0) 0 Coventry (0) 0 Port Vale (0) 0
1st Man City (0) 0 Coventry (0) 0 Port Vale (0) 0

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INTERACTIVE

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Chelsea chase more silverware, page 14
Davies the Wales stripper, page 15

Sheffield find fresh steel, page 14
Beck gets back to basics, page 15

SportsGuardian

Second one-day international

West Indies v England

Knight defies tricky pitch

Mike Selvey in Bridgetown on the opener's stalwart innings

NICK KNIGHT continued his superlative form in the one-day series by providing the foundations for an impressive England total at Kensington Oval yesterday.

On the same pitch on which he made 122 to take the Man-of-the-Match award in the first game on Sunday, but in altogether more testing conditions, he made 90 from 107 deliveries, with a six, hooked off Courtney Walsh, and seven fours, before England were all out off the final ball for 268.

With conditions easier in the afternoon West Indies got off to a thunderous start in reply, reaching 106 for three in the first 15 overs before Robert Croft and Mark Ealham began to reel them in.

Clayton Lambert and Philo Wallace had seized with relish on the new-ball bowling of Doug Brown and Dean Headley, scoring 41 before Brown had Wallace well caught by Adam Hoolioke at mid-off in the fifth over. Lambert then hit three successive boundaries off Headley before he was run out in spectacular fashion by Knight, who dived to save Brian Lara's push into the covers and, still off balance, threw down the stumps.

It was Headley who took the prime wicket, though, and credit to Hoolioke for persisting with him despite an onslaught that saw him concede 68 runs from seven overs with the new ball. Lara, having made 24 from 19 balls, leaned back to force Headley through the off side but hit straight to Mark Ramprakash at cover, who set off on a run of unadulterated joy.

It was crucial and although Stuart Williams — playing instead of Shivarine Chandernaul, who was ill — and Carl Hooper began to repair the breach, West Indies lacked England's depth and at 149 for three off 28 overs the match was still balanced.

If England's batting on Sun-

day had touched the heights at times, yesterday's performance was perhaps even more stunning, the key being determination — and more than a little luck early on — allied to the depth and confidence in the batting order which brought 87 runs from the last eight overs of the innings.

The pitch, which had been watered on Monday, a sweltering day, then spent all of Tuesday and the night before the match swathed in covers as the rain teemed down. When finally it was exposed, the surface had the dull polish of a recently plastered and not yet dry wall. It was guaranteed to prove awkward.

Lara won his fifth consecutive toss, and in the conditions would have been considered barking if he had not asked England to bat. With the seam biting like a rottweiler, Knight and Alec Stewart did well to survive the supreme test from curly Ambrose, and runs came at such a dribble that it might have been fairer to award four

runs if the ball went beyond the 30-yard fielding circle.

Even with the fielding restrictions the first boundary did not come until the seventh over, when Knight edged Ambrose to third man. It was gritty stuff, Stewart in particular never looking comfortable, and it was no surprise when he was out driving a catch to backward point.

Although Ben Hoolioke had slipped down the order in the first game he came in first wicket today and time and proceeded to give the beginnings of impetus to the innings, scoring 16 of a second-wicket stand of 50 — from only 37 balls — with Knight before he was telegraphically caught by Franklin Rose off his own bowling.

Craze Hick soon followed, bowled through his legs in Rawl Lewis's first over of leg-spin. Knight was into his stride by now, though, driving and pulling confidently, passing his half-century in the following over and celebrating by dancing down the pitch to Rose and belting him through extra cover for four more runs.

Ramprakash, in his first one-day international since the tour of South Africa two winters ago — he was playing because Graham Thorpe's back injury necessitated the Surrey left-hander's return home — had joined Knight and the pair added 69, with Ramprakash making 29 before he was caught at deep square leg off Lewis trying to repeat the biggest six of the series, which he had dumped over midwicket earlier in the over.

Knight's tremendous effort came to an end four overs later when he was lbw to Phil Simmons, but although Adam Hoolioke was unfortunate to be run out by Walsh's delivery on to the stumps shortly afterwards, the building blocks were in place for a final charge. It came in a thunderous fashion, from Brown (21 from 26 balls), from Matthew Fleming (28 from 17), but in particular from Ealham, who hit with such power and confidence that his 45 took only 37 balls and included a six and five fours.

Scoreboard

ENGLAND XI	30
N V Knight (c) b Simmons	3
A J Stewart c Lara b Walsh	16
B C Hoolioke c b Rose	16
C A Hick b Lewis	29
M Ramprakash c Ambrose b Lewis	29
A J Hoolioke run out	46
A J Hoolioke run out	21
O R Brown b Simmons	21
M V Fleming c Williams b Ambrose	28
D B Croft not out	11
O W Headley b Ambrose	12
Extras (Rd, w, nb)	12
Total (for 10, 50 overs)	268
Fall of wickets: 21, 71, 72, 131, 154, 168, 206, 239, 257	
Bowling: Ambrose 10-0-44-2; Walsh 10-1-1-1; Rose 8-0-50-1; Lewis 10-0-40-2; Simmons 8-0-40-3; Hooper 4-0-33-0.	

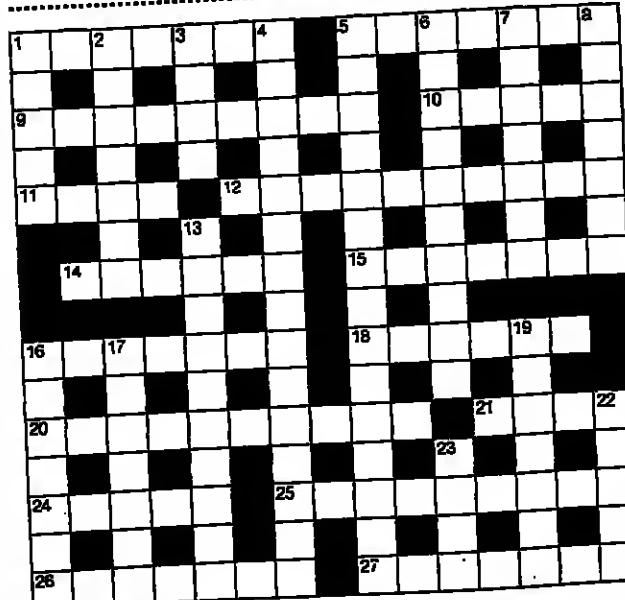
WEST INDIES XI	28
C B Lambert not out	22
P A Wallace c A J Hoolioke b Brown	24
B C Lara c Ramprakash b Headley	27
Stuart Williams not out	27
C L Hooper not out	27
Extras (lb, w, nb)	8
Total (for 3, 28.2 overs)	190
Fall of wickets: 41, 54, 79	
To bat: P V Simmons, P D Jacobs, F A Rose, C E L Ambrose, C A Walsh, R N Lewis.	
Umpires: B Morgan and E Nicholas	



Pulling England round... Nick Knight hits one of his eight boundaries after a slow start

PHOTOGRAPH: KIERAN DOHERTY

Guardian Crossword No 21,238



Across

- Don't upset to a degree, so get out of the way (7)
- Turn over top card first for prize (7)
- A slug can spoil good parts (5)
- Speak in calm but terse fashion (5)
- Bar bender (4)
- Clergy hoped riots could be settled (10)
- Water pistol first seen at the tea table (5)
- Aboard a ship is the owner (7)

- Power to choose in calamitous situation whence improvement may be in sight (7)
- Bath chap? (5)
- Wild storm break associated with gothic novel (4,6)
- Talking bird (4)
- Man with identity, in a manner of speaking (5)
- Philosopher bashing the church in size 10 (5)
- African party in fair business condition (7)
- Woman named? (7)

Down

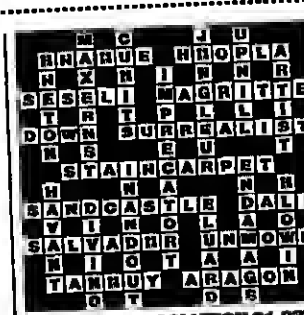
- Provocation may cause some strange reaction (5)
- Form of verse composed in Staines (7)
- Ben is good at divinity (4)
- Funeral parlour? (5,6)
- Take the law into one's own hands? (5,3,7)
- Number one in support of music? (5,5)
- Cannabis particles used for medication (7)
- Sometimes their object is rated unfriendly (7)
- Mink hasten to disperse from around the M25 (7,3)
- Gather report on return of cheese (French) (7)
- Enthusiastic reception to nil tax charge (7)
- Lie with 21 — it could be quite proper (7)
- One gets out of the way of the tough (5)
- Scribe who wrote about the last time (4)

Solution tomorrow



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ABFPRST

Aintree put out to glass



Frank Keating

SIR PETER O'Sullivan will not be calling the horses at Liverpool on Saturday for the first time in half a century, but he will be turning up in style all right — champagne breakfast on the Pullman from London.

The octogenarian can still sum up in a sentence the unique appeal of the annual 10-minute Aintree mullarky "Challenger du Luc might find the Grand National amusing or he might reach the first fence and say 'Not for me, thank you'."

It is a year since that eerie, time-suspended weekend between the Saturday bomb scare and the running of the race on the Monday. And for some reason the memory bank remains most full not of Lord Gyllene's epic confidence-restoring gallop but of the wave upon wave of relieved and fond all's-well-with-the-

world-after-all cheers when it was announced that O'Sullivan was in place and ready for his final Aintree commentary.

Before the police cleared the course last year the commentator had found time modestly to witness the unveiling of a permanent statue to himself, and by August this year there will be more mementoes on view to the public when Aintree's new visitors' centre and museum is opened.

O'Sullivan has presented his aide memoire sheet, a "crib" in coloured crayons and personal hieroglyphics of the runners in the 1961 National, only the second he called for television which began transmitting live the year before. Previously he read the race for radio.

From that 1961 race, won by the grey Nicolas Silver, O'Sullivan has also given the museum a framed racecard signed by two Russian jockeys and Masters of Soviet Sport, Vladimir Prakhov and Boris Ponomarenko, who had suddenly arrived with their horses by train in an all too brief and jolly attempt to defeat the Cold War. Relief threw Ponomarenko at Valentine's Brook, and Prakhov, having remounted Grifol after tumbling off at Becher's first time round, pulled up at the Water.

With a small budget to pur-

chase memorabilia — a Royal Doulton tankard depicting 1937's winner Royal Mail was recently bought at auction — Aintree's marketing manager Joe McNally has already received any number of gifts or loans for the collection, the oldest so far being a package of artefacts, donated by the trainer David Nicholson, of one of his grandest Victorian predecessors William Holman, who saddled three winners in the 1850s.

There are winners' sashes and horseshoes worn by no end of winners, from ESB in 1956 to Lord Gyllene. Richard Pitman has given a square of wooden floor from the old County Stand with the gallant Crisp's name engraved upon it, and Mercy Rimell signed racecards of her husband Fred's record string of National successes between 1956 (ESB) and 1970 (Gay Trip).

USAN FIGGOTT has donated two family heirlooms from her husband Lester's ancestor Ernie, who won the race on Jerry M (1912) and Poethlyn (in 1918 when it was run at Gatwick).

The most prized of items of trivia already glass-cased will probably be the last red starter's flag ever used — or not, as the case may be — by Capt

Keith Brown in the race that never was in 1993, the jockey John Buckingham's whip with which he steered clear of the carnage of Jump 23 in 1957, and the skull-cap worn by Dick Francis when Devon Loch so dramatically sank himself in 1956's run-in in front of his owner, the Queen Mother.

It would have been the Royal Family's second National winner — and, nicely, the Royal Stud has loaned the embroidered parade-ring rug of its solitary No. 1, Ambush 11 in 1900, when Edward, Prince of Wales, was assailed by a tremendous volley of affection.

O'Sullivan will be able on Saturday to have a leisurely Aintree lunch for only the second time in 51 successive Grand Nationals. He had one with the Marquis of Portgalo in 1952, the year the owner Aintree, Mirabel Topham, banned the BBC microphones.

The Spaniard had ridden (and fallen) twice in the National and had also won motor racing grands prix, set a Cresta Run record and been an Olympic swimmer. He was killed driving in the Mille Miglia five years after his Aintree lunch with Sir Peter. Now there's a menu they should put in a museum.

Racing, page 13

TO TAKE CORNERS PROPERLY, JUST PUT ON SOME GERMANS

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